



THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

OCULI

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

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Collect of the Day:

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Introit:

Psalm 25:1-2, 17-18, 20 (antiphon: Psalm 25:15-16) – *My eyes (oculi) are ever toward the LORD, for he will pluck my feet out of the net.*

Psalm:

Psalm 136:1-16 (antiphon: v. 26) – *His steadfast love endures forever*

Old Testament Reading:

Exodus 8:16-24 – *The finger of God sends plagues on Egypt*

Gradual:

Psalm 9:19, 3 – *Arise, O LORD, Let not man prevail; Let the nations be judged before you! When my enemies turn back, They stumble and perish before your presence.*

Epistle:

Ephesians 5:1-9 – *Walk in love*

Tract:

Psalm 123:1-3a – *To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us.*

Luke 11:14-28 ESV

Author and Date:

St. Luke penned this Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit ca. AD 55-60.

¹⁴ Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. ¹⁵ But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,” ¹⁶ while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. ¹⁷ But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. ¹⁸ And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. ¹⁹ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁰ But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; ²² but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. ²³ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

- This Gospel highlights the battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. These two kingdoms have been in mortal combat from the time of the fall of Satan.

- The Gospel begins with Jesus performing an exorcism. He “casts out” a demon out from a mute man. This Gospel challenges the reigning scientific, naturalistic worldview. Jesus believed in demons and the devil, so His Church and Christians today do well to think in terms of the Biblical worldview.
 - “Beelzebul” – literally means “lord of the house.” It is a name for Satan. The people were saying that Jesus cast out demons by the power of the prince of demons. This was a deep insult to Jesus.
 - “The finger of God” (v. 20) is the Holy Spirit. Just as God worked through Moses to afflict wicked Pharaoh and Egypt with the ten plagues, so also Jesus casts out (exorcises) the demons by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - The devil is “the strong man.” His kingdom has been all but secure. But in the coming of Jesus Christ, the Stronger One, God has launched an offensive against the devil’s kingdom. Like Samson of old, Christ is strong to stand in the places of the evil one and topple his kingdom. This Christ appeared to lose in His death. But His heel was only bruised (Genesis 3:15) After His death, Jesus even descended into hell to taunt the devil with His victory over him (1 Peter 3:19). Christ rose victorious for us. The Seed of the Woman crushed the Satan’s head once and for all (Genesis 3:15). Now the strong one is weak. Satan is like a defeated general on the retreat. His hosts shield themselves from reality in the fox holes. Jesus Christ is our salvation and champion in the mortal combat between the kingdoms of God and the devil.
- ²⁴ **“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ ²⁵ And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first.”**
- An “unclean spirit” is unclean because it is evil. It has no rest. This is unique divine insight into the restless life of a defeated, wicked spirit under the reign of Christ.
 - The spirit tries to return to a place where it was before. When it returns, it brings seven other spirits worse than itself. The last state of that person is worse. There is no joy in going back to a former, sinful way of living. It is not safe, or neutral to leave the Church and the Holy Spirit’s protection. Demons haunt those who were once believers. There is no comfort in apostasy.
- ²⁷ **As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” ²⁸ But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”**
- Jesus chides against devotion to Mary, His mother. He promises blessing to all who hear and keep His Word. It is not one’s blood or connections, but adherence to His Word that makes one a disciple of Jesus Christ. Christians cling to Christ and His Word by treasuring its contents with joy. In that Word is the Gospel, which declares the sinner righteous before God. Christ Jesus has shed His blood to conquer the devil and all the forces which undermine His Word. He promises to protect the baptized from these evil forces of the devil’s kingdom. He is faithful. He will keep His promises for you.

