

October 9, 2016
2 Timothy 2:1-13

Proper 23C
A Binding Agent!

Grace, mercy and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

When things break or need fixing what do you use? Maybe you get out your Super Glue, Gorilla Glue, or Duct Tape. Or if it's cloth you will probably use a needle and thread. In life we need binding agents, we need to be able to bind things together...especially when things are broken or perhaps when you are building something or working on a craft project. You see there are many different binding agents used to keep things bound together. Many times this is helpful.

But...when it comes to your life, being bound to somethings is not helpful, and really is not healthy. In all three readings for today we hear of people that are hard pressed, perhaps even bound and suffering. They are struggling with life. Relationships, doubt and fear, grief, health, life circumstances. These are struggles that you all have encountered. These struggles seem to take over our lives. Perhaps you are even like me and lay awake at night when you are bound to some struggle in life. Sometimes these struggles take you captive, they seize you and bind you. They take your life and make it miserable. In these instances, you are tempted to find a way out on your own, you are tempted to fleeting moments of pleasure. You are tempted to forgo trusting in the Lord God Almighty, the One who Created you, redeemed you, and sanctifies you.

You feel like you are held captive, bound with ropes, cables, shackles, handcuffs, whatever keeps you locked up and unable to be freed!

Each of our readings someone is bound. In Luke 17, the lepers are bound to their health. Traditionally when one contracted leprosy they were cast out of the city, they were removed from their families and their friends. They were removed from society, because they were unclean. They were bound to their health. They suffered immensely. Really this disease put them in prison, it entrapped them. It changed their life.

Are you bound to your health? Perhaps you are, perhaps you are unable to do the things you enjoyed when you were younger and more agile. Perhaps you are for the most part stuck inside your homes, because your health prevents you from going out and being amongst the people you love. Perhaps it has caused you to removed yourself from work or the ability to drive or the ability to live on your own. Sometimes it feels as if you are bound to your health. Sometimes it feels as if your health entraps you!

But...THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT BOUND IN YOUR LIFE. When Jesus met the leper and the other nine entrapped and bound in their health, He used His Word and freed them from their bondage. When the one leper realized what the Word of God did in His life, He went back and gave thanks to the Lord His God, His Savior. The Word of God is not bound in your life either,

even if you aren't physically healed, the Word of God still frees you in your Spiritual Health. You can still see God's grace and mercy in your life as the Word of God is not bound!

You are bound by your relationships. Relationships bind us tightly, sometimes they bind us in the all the right reasons. We know that relationships are complicated, from the most intimate of relationship as husband and wife to the most general relationship of strangers. There are times that we enjoy our relationships and there are times that we try to remove ourselves from a relationship that God has given to use.

In the Old Testament lesson, we hear the beginning of the story of Naomi and Ruth. After the death of Naomi's husband and sons she decides she wanted to shut the door on that part of her life and give up on her daughters-in-law. She finds herself cursed by God for some sin she committed. She didn't want her daughters-in-law to suffer along with her. In relationships you oftentimes bind ourselves to some guilt or some hidden shame and we cannot see God.

Or you do the opposite, you bind yourself to resentment against those who have sinned against you. Rather than see them in need of forgiveness, of being rescued from guilt and shame, so you judge, you pour out your wrath against them, you perhaps even want to see them suffer in some way or you yourself cause them suffering. You bind yourselves in revenge, hatred, and resentment.

THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT BOUND!

People are sent into our lives, just like Ruth was sent to Naomi. Ruth although not a follower of God when she met Naomi, bound herself to Naomi's God and knew that God would not abandon her. Ruth was an encourager, she even bound herself to Naomi and Her God! Ruth encouraged her and lived the gospel out for Naomi. The Word of God is not bound, it penetrates your life, and your relationships. Because of the Word of God you know the promises of God, and these promises of God, the Good News of God frees you from your sins, your resentment, your guilt, your revengeful thoughts, and frees you to forgive as Christ has forgiven you.

Perhaps you are bound by your circumstances!

That's where we find Paul today. He was bound by circumstances from proclaiming the Gospel all over the Mediterranean area. He was planting churches and sharing the unbound Word of God. Now he finds himself bound, bound in chains for being a soldier of God! He is bound in chains, Paul is suffering from His circumstances. Paul is literally bound by his circumstances. He is shackled and in chains sitting in prison for the sake of the Gospel. For the government was trying to bind the Word of God, to keep it out of the hands of the people.

Yet, Paul saw the hand of God in His circumstances!

How often do you get blinded from seeing God at work in your current circumstance? How often would you rather not see God's hand at work, for then you could do what you please? You could disappear for a while from God and fix your circumstance. You could run away from God like Jonah and try to fix it. Maybe your circumstance is your job and you're not happy with it. Maybe your circumstance is the place where you live and you feel stuck and trapped and bound. Maybe your circumstance is that harvest is here and you don't your husband or your dad or your son very much. Maybe your circumstance is that prices for the crops are down. Sometimes you can't control the circumstances in your life. Maybe you are suffering from something, like Paul that you don't deserve. Or maybe your circumstance is something that you do deserve! The temptation to sin is incredible isn't it! You want the power of God without the wisdom and responsibility behind it.

Paul was in the most dire of circumstances, he was bound for preaching the Gospel, yet with Great Joy he declares, THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT BOUND. Even as he sits bound in his prison cell he hears words of the gospel being proclaimed. Some even proclaim it to, so that he even gets into more trouble. We also here account in the book of Acts where the prison guards came to faith. The word of God is not bound, it penetrates jails, circumstances, relationships, and lives!

We very well might see people trying to bind the Word of God in the future, and perhaps you yourselves unknowingly are binding the Word of God, but God has a promise for you. The Word of God is not bound, it will continue to penetrate lives and continue to bring faith and life.

For the Word of God is not bound, but it does bind. It binds you to Christ. Paul reminds Timothy, a young pastor, who might be discouraged at his own ministry, but he also reminds every Christian, the word of God is not bound. "Remember," Paul writes, "Jesus Christ, risen from dead, the offspring of David..." He also tells Timothy and you, "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus..." In essence he is reminding Timothy, the gospel of Christ—there is nowhere on earth that it cannot penetrate into lives, relationships, circumstances and change them, and change you. There is nowhere on earth that the word of God cannot bring life, hope, mercy, and love. He encourages Pastor Timothy and you to pass the Word of God to others.

I just told you that the Word of God is a binding agent! Much stronger than any duct tape, super glue, gorilla glue, needle and thread or shackle, rope, and chain. St. Paul writes in the closing words of our text, "The saying is trustworthy, for: IF we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us, if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself."

You know that Word of God has bound you to Christ. You died with Christ in your baptism. There in your baptism the Word of God binds you to Christ. It's not just the water, it's the Word of God. When you come to the Lord's Supper, the Word of God binds you to Christ. The Word of God is a great binding agent, and God does not lie, God cannot deny himself. What He

says is true and the Gospel is true. The Word of God comes into your life, changes you, provides you hope. In the Word of God, God forgives your sins and binds you to your Savior Jesus. Thank God, that the word of God is not bound, it frees you from the bondage that you are in, whether it be health, relationships, life circumstances, or even your bondage to sin. When it breaks those shackles, it binds you to Christ!

This is exactly why we gather every Sunday to hear the Word, to receive His Word, so that the Word made flesh can continue to bind you to Himself!

In Jesus name. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding guard your hearts and minds and keep them focuses in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.