

Romans 8:33

MW Advent 3, Dec. 14, 2022

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“Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.”

You all know the saying, “Silence is Golden.” We don’t know who first coined that phrase, but it’s thought to be a proverb dating all the way back to the 800’s. That’s 1200 years of people who’ve likely all been in agreement with that idea: “Silence is Golden.” When you’re the parent of a baby who can’t fall asleep without crying for a while but finally has drifted off into sleep. . . “Silence is Golden.” When you work a job in a noisy manufacturing plant or busy warehouse, but then you get into the car and shut the door. . . “Silence is Golden.” When a spouse decides not to escalate an argument, but instead bites their tongue. . . “Silence is Golden.”

But silence isn’t always “golden,” is it? I can think of a few occasions when silence can actually be most unwelcome or even very destructive. Like when a family passes away, and suddenly the house is just that much more quiet. . . “Silence is far from Golden.” When a person commits a sin, but he neither asks for forgiveness, nor does anyone confront him with his sin for repentance. . . “Silence is far from Golden” there too. Or when a person has been struck with grief over their sins and they are sorry, but there’s no forgiveness to be heard. . . well, then “Silence is [again] far from Golden.”

These Wednesday mornings during Advent, we’ve been considering the various lessons in silence in our preparation for Christmas. We considered the Silence of Zechariah—an angel-imposed silence teaching him and us that God’s promises are never in doubt. Then there was the Silence of Mary, a meditative silence which seeks to take these promises of God and apply them to ourselves.

This morning, we come to our final meditation on Silence, which is coming from what might seem like a strange source. Today, we’ll be looking at **The Silence of Satan**. We consider him who would be our accuser before God, who would like nothing more than to point out our sin and guilt before the Judge of All, but who has been forever silenced by the victory of our Savior Jesus Christ.

The “Silence of Satan” might seem like a strange focus to wrap up our midweek Advent series, certainly because he’s the devil, and this is the season of shepherds and angels and wisemen. It also might seem like an odd topic because there really aren’t that many words of Satan recorded in Scripture to begin with. So, what really is, “The Silence of Satan”? He’s silent the majority of the time!

There really are only three sections in Scripture in which we find actual words coming from Satan’s lips, and they’re all very familiar. The first occasion is quite obviously in the Garden of Eden. There, he spoke to question and cast doubt on God’s goodness. He asked Eve, ***“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree in the garden?’”*** He chose his next words carefully and lied to the first humans, contradicting God’s Words, by saying, ***“You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*** (cf. Genesis 3:1ff)

The next time, chronologically, where we find the words of Satan recorded is early in the book of Job. There we read the words of Satan as he’s speaking with God, declaring that Job had a shallow faith. “Take everything away from him and then we’ll see if he still believes in you!” (cf. Job 1:6-12)

Then, of course, you likely know the next occasion of Satan speaking in Scripture, that was at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, He then went out into the wilderness where He fasted for forty days. All the while, Satan was launching a full-scale assault on Christ in an attempt to get the Son of God to sin. Here Satan was even speaking God's Words back to Jesus, but he was misquoting them and twisting them and misusing and abusing them.

Could you think of a worse three speech run than that? Lying to ruin God's perfect creation, going to lengths to tear down even just one individual Christian, and then attempting to short-circuit God's plan of Salvation by striving to tempt the Savior? We don't need anymore speeches or even another word to get a full picture of what the devil is all about. He is our enemy, through and through.

That's the way the Bible describes him too. Did you know that the word, "Devil," means "Slanderer"? He's dedicated his entire existence to slandering God in order to hurt God's reputation among people. The Bible also calls him Satan, obviously, which is a Hebrew word meaning, "Adversary." He's the adversary, the enemy of God and God's children. And Jesus gives us a glimpse into the Devil's character when He said, **"[The Devil] is a liar and the father of lies."** (John 8:44) He uses his lies to convince us that good is evil and that evil is actually good. He convinces us that sin is enjoyable, and that it's really not that big of a deal. But his ultimate goal is to take note of our sinfulness and then fill his role as accuser, as our adversary; the book of Revelation describes him as **"The accuser of our brethren. . . who accuses them day and night before our God."** (Revelation 12:10-13)

It's easy then to have this picture of Satan: you're in God's courtroom on Judgment Day, standing before the throne of the mighty Judge. Across the aisle from you with books upon books recording your misdeeds sits Satan, sneering gleefully as he knows he has you cornered. There's a wealth of evidence against you, and he has it all. In that moment, it becomes clear that your number one adversary has always been Satan, yet you fell prey for so many of his lying schemes. Clearly, you've sealed your own fate.

But let's put that image on hold for a second, and read our sermon text again. **"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies."** Doesn't it seem that the logical answer to Paul's inspired question is "Satan"? Doesn't it seem like the Devil will be the prosecuting attorney, that he can and will most certainly bring charges against you at the Final Judgment? Afterall, he successfully tempted you into sin, time after time after time. We can look back across our lives, or hey, even just back over the past day, and can see so much wickedness. We must confess with the Apostle Paul, **"The good that I will to do, I do not do! But the evil I will not to do, that I keep on doing. . . O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"** (Romans 7:19ff)

But do you know the answer to the question in our text? "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" The answer is not, "Satan." The answer is "no one." The reality is that our accuser, our adversary, he will be silent on the day of God's Judgment. If sin were the only basis for bringing a charge against a human being on Judgment Day, then Satan would surely be able to accuse each one of us. Afterall, Paul writes earlier in Romans, **"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight."** (Romans 3:19-20) If that were the end of the story, we'd be silent, with no defense at all.

But Satan is not our judge. He is our tormentor. Therefore, he must remain silent on the Last Day and do nothing more than listen, enraged yes, but silent at the just declaration of our Righteous Judge.

“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?” No one. Why? Because, ***“It is God who justifies.”*** It is God who declares us to be cleansed of sin. It is God who chooses to no longer hold our sins against us. Therefore, in God’s courtroom, it is God alone who will speak, and no one can be accused of sin whom God has already acquitted.

God forgives us, because, in the words of Christ, ***“It is finished.”*** (John 19:30) The punishment we deserved has already been served. Our slates have been wiped clean. God has already announced the verdict, that by His Son’s blood and righteousness, we are “not guilty.” That’s why the Apostle Paul also wrote, ***“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. . . There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** (Romans 5:1; 8:1)

The mouth of Satan will be stopped on that great day, for he has nothing to add to the proceedings. He will not be able to list off our sins, nor will we feel like we have to deny *any* of them. Instead, we can freely confess our sins and lay them at the feet of our Savior. For ***“If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*** (1 John 1:9)

This is what it means that “Satan is Silent.” Satan may accuse us here in time, but God has the last word. His last word: ***“Forgiven. Enter into My eternal rest.”***

In that courtroom scene of Judgment Day, we see the true beauty in that phrase, “Silence is Golden.” Silence is Golden when there’s no charge to be made, no evidence of guilt to be found, no accusation against those who stand with their Savior Jesus the Christ. As we close out this Advent season in a little over a week, ponder these lessons of silence. That God’s promises are sure. That God’s promises are yours. And that means that your *greatest* enemy has already been silenced. Rejoiced, highly favored ones. Amen.

“And the peace of God which surpasses all our understanding will guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7) Amen.