Sermon Option: Jesus the Bondage Breaker

Sermon Text: Hebrews 2:9a, 14b-15 (NKJV)

“But we see Jesus, who was made...for the suffering of death...that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

INTRODUCTION:

1. In 1951 Sam Turner (then 29 years old) was serving an 8-year prison term for voluntary manslaughter and burglary. One day, while working on a road gang, a security lapse gave him the opportunity to "just walk away"—and that's exactly what he did. It took 46 years, but authorities finally caught up with Sam. A routine search of driver's license records turned up the man who had been a fugitive for nearly half a century. Sam Turner ran from captivity to freedom...but in the end his efforts came up short. Was Sam Turner ever TRULY free? Never! He lived 46 years subject to the bondage and fear of recapture and imprisonment.

2. Bondage comes in many forms...and no one wants to be enslaved. Examples:
   i. Slavery to sin – (cite an example; sin is a cruel task master)
   ii. Slavery to poverty – (cite statistics; the prison and pain of hunger)
   iii. Slavery to drugs, depression, dictators, disabilities, disease

3. People all around us are crying for freedom, deliverance, and release
   i. Israel cried, “Is there no Moses to deliver us from Pharaoh's bondage?”
   ii. England cried, “Is there no Wilberforce to declare war against slavery?”
   iii. Today the masses cry, “Who can loose these shackles, and break these chains?”

4. The answer is our text: “We see JESUS.” He is the great BONDAGE BREAKER!
   i. He is the eminent Emancipator and faithful Freedom Fighter!
   ii. He is the Deliverer—the One who will “release those who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

5. CENTRAL to the mission of Jesus is release from bondage and prisons of darkness. The scriptures tell us this is why the Father sent Jesus to live and to die!
   i. First of all, freedom from sin! Paul uses the imagery of slavery in Romans 6: through Jesus’ death we have been “set free from sin”...we are “no longer slaves to sin.” (Good opportunity here to give a thumbnail gospel message.)
   ii. But the mission of Jesus extends beyond deliverance from sin—it also embraces a clear and compelling assignment from the Father to bind up the broken, to proclaim freedom for captives, and to release prisoners from darkness. Jesus was called/sent to be a bondage breaker, not just for sin, but for suffering. (Major point of theology here: importance of justice.)
   iii. Hear it for yourselves. In Luke 4, after Jesus was tested and tempted by the devil in the wilderness, the Bible says He returned in the power of the Spirit to begin His public ministry. He went to His hometown of Nazareth in Galilee, and on the Sabbath entered the synagogue. There He stood up and began to read the scroll from Isaiah 61:1-2: “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners.”
WE, too, are called to be bondage breakers. In John 20:21 Jesus said to His disciples…and thus to us today, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

Friends, we are called to release people from prisons of darkness.

THE PRISON OF DARKNESS
1a What time did your day begin? When the sun poked through the window? When your alarm clock rattled your brains at 5:00 a.m.? (You’re thinking, “In the morning, of course!”)

2a But what if I told you your day began last night as the sun set? In our modern world, we think of our 24 hour day as sun rise to sun rise, i.e., we rise, we work, and then we end the day with rest…so we can recover from our work.

3a The ancient Hebrew day, however, ran from sundown to sundown. Think about it: if we did that, we would rest first, then we would rise and do our work. Since rest is first, rest becomes the source and fuel to do the work – rather than merely recovery from it.

4a Where did the Jewish people get this holy principal? From Genesis; from the creation account; from the God who never sleeps. Genesis 1:3: “And there was evening, and there was morning - the first day.”

5a According to Rachel Olsen in Laying Me Down to Sleep, “A secular rhythm of life makes work primary…a sacred rhythm makes rest primary.” The sacred rhythm is rest, rise, work; the secular rhythm is rise, work, rest.

6a Olsen quotes pastor and author Eugene Peterson who explains: “This Hebrew evening/morning sequence conditions us to the rhythms of grace. We go to sleep and God begins his work” [i.e., his work during the night…his work in the darkness]. Peterson continues, “We wake and are called to participate in God’s creative action” [in what He did during the night darkness]. So in the evening, without our help, God begins His creative day. In the morning, God calls us to enjoy, share and develop the work He initiated.

7a Listen closely. The night watch, that precious season of rest and darkness, is the beginning of the day, and is designed by God to allow you after sleep to rise and walk in His creative grace and faith. You lie down, close your eyes, pray, and slip from consciousness, with the understanding that the God of grace will be at work on your behalf. YOUR NIGHT IS SET APART BY GOD TO BE HOLY.

1b But imagine with me what it would be like if every night of your life was a terror…if you dreaded the darkness…if sleep was only intermittent and disrupted.

2b Imagine the trauma of fearing the night without rest or reprieve: night after night, month after month, year after year. Could you endure?

3b Imagine with me, if you can fathom it, the terror that would paralyze you…if the thing you feared at night possessed the “power of death,” as in our text…if it could subject you to a “lifetime of bondage” as in our text.

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4b You see, if God set the night apart to be holy, restful, and alive with His creative grace, then one must conclude that a child, or a family, or a community or a continent that is terrorized by the night is indeed suffering…and is in bondage…is imprisoned in darkness…and is in need of Jesus, the great Bondage Breaker!

5b Jesus, the Liberator, came to release prisoners from darkness and to set captives free. Jesus, the faithful Freedom Fighter came to destroy the fear of death and eradicate the terror of night.

6b So I ask you, are we just imagining this, or is there a real PRISON OF DARKNESS? Absolutely, it is real, and the Spirit of Jesus is calling us to break the bondage! He is sounding a trumpet and rallying the Church to declare war on a night predator.

THE PREDATOR OF NIGHT
1a Testimony of Jeff Farmer (President, Open Bible Churches)
   i It was July 2010. Jeff was home resting…preparing to read and memorize Psalm 91.
   ii He decided to first quickly review a World Vision letter sent in the mail. It turned out the letter addressed the problem of malaria, of which Jeff knew nothing.
   iii He was shocked/horrified by the number of deaths: nearly one million a year! Ninety-one percent of the cases are in the continent of Africa. Of those infections…85% are in children ages five and under. A child dies nearly every 45 seconds from malaria; about 2,000 people die every single day. These numbers numb our sensibilities!!

2a Steve Haas, VP of World Vision, says: “These numbers have faces, and the faces have names, and the names are people who are precious to our Father in heaven. And because they are precious to the Father, they are precious to us as well.”

3a Putting the letter aside, Farmer began to read and memorize Psalm 91. The Psalm began promising “shelter, refuge, and a covering.” When he came to verses five and six the Holy Spirit squeezed his heart and moved his spirit deeply: “You will not fear the terror of night…nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness.”
   i In an instant of time God aligned the Scripture with the WV letter, and resting there on July 14, 2010, Farmer recognized the now familiar voice of Jesus, the Bondage Breaker, calling him to a place of obedience and action.
   ii God began to break his heart for people around the world who are “subject to a lifetime of bondage:” for mothers and fathers and children who are stalked by a night predator and who fear the darkness.

1b History & Science of Malaria
Before picking up that letter, Jeff did not know a mosquito was the carrier of the malaria parasite. Neither did he know the mosquito bites mainly at night. But there was much, much more he did not know.

2b If I were to ask you what is human history’s biggest killer, how would you respond? Deaths from wars? Cancer? TB? HIV/AIDS? Natural disasters? None of these. A recent Scientific American article says the answer is malaria. Malaria has a long history on this planet, wielding the “power of death,” and the “fear of death” wherever it stalks.
Ancient Chinese medical writings from 2700 BC describe the symptoms of malaria. In the fifth century, Hypocrites actually described the clinical manifestations of the disease.

Malaria is recorded to have played a major role in the fall of the Roman Empire and is credited with 25% of all Civil War deaths.

Hundreds of thousands of American slaves died from malaria, and over 60K US service men lost their lives from the mosquito’s lethal injection in the African and South Pacific campaigns of WWII.

The deadly malaria parasite resides in the salivary glands of an infected, female Anopheles mosquito. The parasite is called Plasmodium. When it bites a victim, the parasite flows through the blood stream to the person’s liver. There it grows until it matures to “adolescence” stage, when it ejects its death back into the blood stream infecting the red blood cells. When a non-infected mosquito bites this victim, it then becomes a carrier too, and the cycle is perpetuated. Nearly one million people die every year from this night predator.

THE POWER OF LIGHT

“But we see Jesus!” He can destroy this night predator. He dispels darkness.

The first thing God spoke into existence was light. Genesis 1:2.

Light is not the opposite of darkness; light is the absence of darkness. That is why Jesus said, “I am the Light of the world.” John 8:12. He is the bondage breaker! He breaks the bondage of any and every kind of darkness. He can loose the shackles that enslave and imprison millions of people with malaria. (John 1:4-5: “In him was life…the light of men…darkness can never extinguish it.” NLT)

Illustration: You cannot walk into a room and turn a “Dark Switch” on. There is no such thing. No…you must turn the light switch off. If there is darkness in the room, or in a person, or in a nation, it is because the light has been removed!

But Jesus said to His disciples, “It is not just me.” “You are the light of the world too.” Matthew 5:14. God’s sons and daughters are called to be light sabers…to diffuse the light and life of Jesus…in the hearts of people and in the communities in which they live.

You and I usually think of light in the physical sense, i.e., as rays from the sun. (In physics light is an electromagnetic radiation in the wave-length range that includes infrared, visible colors, ultraviolet, and X-rays). But in a biblical context, light can mean something else as well – it can mean wisdom and insight. It can mean Jesus, the bondage breaker, gives us knowledge and revelation.

Let us not forget James 1:17: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.” (Notice “lights” is plural.)

Biblical worldview was critical to the early formation of “science.” Nearly all early scientists were Christians; their belief in Scripture and revelation prompted their research.
1b And that is how North America turned the light switch on to dispel and destroy the demonic darkness of malaria in our nation! We defeated the night predator! We opened the prison of darkness in 1951.

2b Through JESUS, who is the Wisdom of God and the Light of the world, YOU AND I CAN PUT OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN TO BED WITHOUT “FEAR OF DEATH;” WITHOUT “THE TERROR OF NIGHT.”

3b You and I do not wake up afraid a mosquito is biting our children, nor are we faced with the high fever, pain, and trembling that accompanies malaria.

4b Because malaria is 100% preventable! (Don’t miss that. Repeat.) We solved it! It is not as complex as cancer or HIV/AIDS which still require billions in research.

5b In the early 1950s we won the war on malaria! (US Center for Disease Control was founded because of its fight against malaria.) But we failed to export that grace of God to other nations – and so today – and every day – a precious child will die every 45 seconds from a lethal mosquito bite…because he or she was born in the wrong place…because North America and the Church did not declare “War on Malaria.”

6b This is a winnable war!! In this hour God is speaking to His Church. I can hear the sound of Christian soldiers and armor-bearers mobilizing for war! Sound the battle cry! The Church of Jesus Christ is uniting under the banner of the great Bondage Breaker.

7b WE SEE JESUS!! HE WAS MADE FOR THE SUFFERING OF DEATH, THAT HE MIGHT DESTROY HIM WHO HAS THE POWER OF DEATH, AND RELEASE FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH THOSE ALL THEIR LIFETIME SUBJECT TO BONDAGE.

CONCLUSION

1 On July 31, 1838, on the Island of Jamaica, William Knibbs gathered 10,000 slaves for a great praise gathering. They were celebrating the new Emancipation Proclamation Act that would abolish slavery on the island. They had built an immense coffin and into it were placed whips, branding irons, chains, shackles, slave garments and all the things that represented the terrible slavery system that was now coming to a welcome end.

At the first stroke of the midnight bell, Knibbs shouted out, “The monster is dying.” At each stroke of the bell that followed this cry was repeated and the great crowd began to join the cry. At the twelfth stroke 10,000 voices cried out, “The monster is dead, the monster is dead. Let us bury him.” They then screwed the coffin lid down, lowered it into a huge grave and covered it up. That night, every heart rejoiced and 10,000 voices grew hoarse, shouting and crying with joy. For a lifetime they had been subject to bondage, but now they were free.

There is a tragic side to this story. While many slaves rejoiced in their new liberty and freedom, there were some who lived in remote areas of the island. They did not know they had legally been set free. Because they didn’t know, for many years after the Emancipation Proclamation had been made a law, they still continued to serve their slave masters. Their former masters successfully kept the news from them as long as they could. By law they had been declared free men and did not have to live as slaves any longer. However, ignorance of the truth kept them in bondage.
Today, if we knew of something like that happening, we’d be shocked and even angry. But the truth is, the same thing is happening in our day. Millions and millions of people are needlessly enslaved to a “pestilence that stalks in darkness:” to a simple mosquito bite. They are prisoners of the night and live in constant fear of death. But Jesus has issued a Proclamation of Emancipation…that liberates not only from sin, but from sickness and suffering.

Dear friends, a $10 insecticide-laden bed net will help save the lives of two children for up to four years. Let me say that again: for $10 you can shelter and protect and help save the lives of two children from this lethal injection.

YOU CAN BE A BONDAGE BREAKER, which is central to the mission of Jesus and to all of His followers!

You can restore to mothers and fathers and their children the love of nighttime…of evening rest…of those creative hours when the God of grace never sleeps, but works on our behalf.

You can release from a prison of darkness precious people who have been subjected to bondage for a lifetime.

You can destroy this night predator who brings terror and fear.

Slavery is a terrible thing! No one should be in bondage when we know the Liberator and Emancipator wants to work through us to deliver and save.

God is doing something right now that is bigger than we could ask or imagine. It is history-making and earth-shaking! God is bringing His Church together to declare war on malaria…to eliminate it…to destroy it…to eradicate it!

One Church. One Voice. One Vision. End Malaria.