

 **Main Street**
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Luke 11:14-36
“Disciples Get In On The Battle”

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(4th Sunday After Epiphany)

Pastor Phil Thrailkill
Main Street UMC
211 North Main St., Greenwood, SC 29646
Church Office: 864-229-7551
Church Website: www.msumc1.org

“Following Christ From City Center!”

E: LUKE 11:14-36 "DISCIPLES GET IN ON THE BATTLE"

Not Punishment, Frailty, Sin But Bondage

1) v.14 PROVOCATIVE ACTION OF JESUS: PUBLIC DELIVERANCE. 4:18-19, Life Reclaimed!

14 Now he was casting out a demon that was dumb; 1. Diagnosis + Engagement //Mt. 9:32-34, Named By Effects
when the demon had gone out, 2. Cure: Something left 4:14, Jesus Means Freedom
the dumb man spoke, 3a. Evidence 1: Benefit to the sufferer = freedom Is. 35:6
and the people marveled. 3b. Evidence 2: Public response 4 Parts, 9:1, 17-18
Speechless 1:20 (God's Judgment), 11:14 (Demon), Mk. 7:32 (Fallen World)
Action + Assault + Reply = 5:17-26, 7:36-50, 13:10-17, 15:1-32, Acts 11:1-17

2) vv.15-36 TWO NEGATIVE RESPONSES AND THE SUBSEQUENT TEACHING OF JESUS.

Mercy In Signs & Wonders Not Always Lead To Faith!

a) v.15 First Negative: Jesus Is A Magician Who Uses Demonic Power To Achieve His Ends.

15 But some of them said, Mk. 3:22-30, Mt. 12:24, Ad Hominem Campaign = Works For Satan, Deviant!
He casts out demons by Be-elzebul, the prince of demons"; False Prophet, Alias For Satan, His Power Is Evil
Jn. 14:30, 16:11, Acknowledge Power, Question Source

b) v.16 Second Negative: Jesus Needs To Show More Confirming Credentials (L).

16 while others, to test him, //4:1-13, 11:4 Link, Sign Of Spiritual Blindness
sought (continually) from him a sign from heaven. Mk. 8:11-12, Want Objective Credentials, 10:17-18
What Happened To Man, Complainers, Woman, Crowd?

a') vv.17-28 Jesus Answers The First Charge: 3 Sections, Each With 2 Sayings.

Charge Is Illogical (vv.17-18), Inconsistent (v.19), What If? (v.20)

(1) vv.17-20 The Kingdom Of Satan And The Counter-Kingdom Of God. Jesus Is No Magician

Mk. 3:24-25, Mt. 12:27-30, Principle 1: Satan Preserves Influence

17 a But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, 2:35, 5:22, 6:8, 7:39, Jesus = Prophet: Word of Knowledge
1 "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, Grace = Jesus Teaches His Opponents

2 and a divided household falls. 10:18 Satan Falls, Proverb: Civil War, Family Strife

18 2' And if Satan also is divided against himself, Absurd, Jesus Not Work From Inside Satan's Kingdom

1' how will his kingdom stand?/ Answer = It Won't Application Question: Contradiction

Principle 2: The Kingdom Of God (3x) Is At War

19 b For you say that I cast out demons by Be-elzebul. cast out (5x), Speaks Of Himself, v.15b Repeated

1 And if I cast out demons by Be-elzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Counter-Question, Disciples?

2 Therefore they shall be your judges. Look In Own Back Yard, Acts 19:13ff.

20 1' *But if it is by 'the finger of God' that I cast out demons, Old Kingdom Expelled, Don't Miss Out!

2' then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 10:9, Mt. 12:28, Option: Jesus Is The Empowered Agent

"Finger of God" Ex. 8:19, 31:18, Moses vs. Pharaoh's Magicians

(2) vv.21-23 Jesus' Attack Upon Satan's Kingdom And The Division It Brings. Is. 49:24-25, 53:12

T. Levi 18.12, Is. 24:22-23, Violent Clash! War With Jesus As Commander

21 a1 When a strong man, Give Him His Due: Strong, Armed, Troops, Hostile, Takes Hostages

2 fully armed, guards his own palace, Metaphor For Satan's Kingdom //Nazi Regime, Slavery

3 his goods are in peace; Proverb/Parable On Security, Territory Unchallenged

22 1 but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, 3:16, Jesus Is The Stronger One! Violent Language

2 he takes away his armor in which he trusted, Defeat, 2 Sam. 2:21 (LXX), Eph. 6:11, Strips Him Of Power

3 and divides his spoil. / Violent Clash Of Kingdoms, Is. 53:12, Plunder/Booty = People!

23 b *He who is not with me is against me, / 2 Images, 9:50, Loyalty =With Jesus Who Freed You! (1)

and he who does not 'gather with me' scatters. No Neutrality, Choice, Make Matters Worse = Scatter Israel

Jesus Taught/Challenged His Opponents = Grace, Love, Patience

(3) vv.24-28 The Threat Of And Two-Fold Cure For Demonic Re-Infestation.

T. Reuben 3:1-8, Principle Of Spiritual Replacement

24 a1 "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, Tobit 8:3, Deliverance Must Be Supplemented

2 he passes through waterless places seeking rest; Mt. 1:43-45, Lev. 16:10, Spiritual Insight

3 and finding none he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' i.e. Human Dwelling

25 3' And when he comes he finds it swept and put in order. Ordered But Empty! Needs New Lord

26 2' Then he goes and brings seven other spirits more EVIL than himself, 8:2, Communication Among Spirits

1' and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."/ Filled With Spirit (2)

Empty Tenement Invites Squatters! New Internal Reality

27 b As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, (L) Gen. 49:25, Blessing Of Mary

"Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" Indirect Blessing Of His Person

28 *But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" 5:1, 8:11, 21, Obey God's Word (3)

b') vv.29-36 Jesus Answers The Second Charge: 2 Sections, Each With 3 Sayings.

They Demanded As Sign From Heaven

(1) vv.29-32 Three Sayings On This Generation Judged By Gentiles.

Mt 12:38-42, Condemnations //10:12-15

29 a When the crowds were increasing, he began to say,
 “This generation is an EVIL generation; it seeks a sign,
 but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah. (1)

30 For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh,
 so will the Son of man be to this generation./ //4:25-27 Gentiles

31 b The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; (2)
 for she came from the ends of the earth *to hear* the wisdom of Solomon, **Gentile Woman**
 and behold, something greater than Solomon is here./ **Jesus Greater: Listen**

32 c The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; **Greater = Spirit’s Power In Jesus**
 for they repented at *the preaching* of Jonah, **Gentile Men (3)**
 and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. **Look! Jesus Greater: Repent**
Jesus Greater Than Jonah: Prophet To Gentiles

(2) vv.33-36 Several Sayings Using The Word Lamp. **Jesus’ Ministry Is Light**

33 a “No one after lighting a lamp **Mt. 5:15, To Call For A Sign Indicates Spiritual Blindness**
 puts it in a cellar or under a bushel, **1:79, 2:32, Jesus’ Ministry (Lamp [3x], Light [6x]) Public Display**
 but on a stand, **Repentance Is The Gateway To Light/Sight/Kingdom**
 that those who enter may see the light./ **Jesus Is God’s Lamp! Public Ministry (1)**
Illumination Of New Converts

34 b Your eye is the lamp of your body; **Premise + 2 Options, How Do People See Jesus?**
Eye Supplies Light, Funnel, Prov. 4:19, World View (2)

b’1 when your eye is sound (lit. *simple*), your whole body is full of light; **Open: See As Jesus Sees**
 2 but when it is EVIL (lit. *wicked*), your body is full of darkness. **See As Opponents See**

35 2’ Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness./ **(L) 8:18, Warning, Repentance**

36 1’ If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, **Hope (3)**
If God Not Rule In The Heart, Cannot See

A Complex And Nuanced Biblical Understanding Of Disease And Torment (Talbert, Luke: 141-142)

Source Of Difficulty	Biblical Examples	Proper Responses	Biblical Examples
1. God’s Punishment of Sin	2 Sam. 12, 14-23 (esp. v.15), 2 Kgs. 15:4-5, 1 Cor. 11:29-32	Repentance, Confession, Forgiveness, Rehabilitation	James 5:14-16, 1 Cor. 11:30-31
2. Due To Satan, though used by God for his purposes.	Job 2:6-7, Luke 13:16, 2 Cor. 12:7	1. Cast out spirits in Jesus’ name 2. Ultimately, only God can lift satanic oppression,. With Job it was not immediate; with Paul it was not in this life. These are special cases, not the norm	Acts 16:18, 19:11ff., 2 Cor. 12:12, Rom. 15:18-19 (Gospel + Power) 2 Cor. 12:9, 17ff., Rom. 8:28
3. Neither due to a person’s sin nor Satan’s harassment but to the imperfections and fallen nature of the current created order outside the kingdom of God.	Gen. 3:14-19, Job 9:2-3, Rom. 8:19-23, 1 Cor. 15:5-, Gal 4:13-14	1. Miraculous intervention: God as Redeemer who acts. 2. Medicine: God as Creator through means	1 Kgs. 17:17-24, 2 Kgs. 4:32-37, 5:1ff, Many NT passages Is. 38:1-5, 1 Tim. 5:23, Tobit 6:7-8, Sirach 38:1-5
Reminder: Even the godly get sick! Given the complexity, discernment/wisdom are required.	2 Kgs. 13:14, Dan. 8:27, Gal. 4:13, Phil. 2:25-30, 2 Tim. 4:40	Humility, See No. 3	

Human And Spiritual Complexity Requires Discernment/ Wisdom/ Illumination

What is the cause? What is the proper avenue of cure? It is spiritual, emotional, physical? It is all here and now? Wait till resurrection?

A Brief Treatment Of 11:14-36

The next thought unit is a composite of Q (material in common with Mt and not found in Mark) and L traditions (only in Luke) edited into a convincing literary whole. A provocative public action of Jesus (1. v.14) is followed by two negative responses (2a. v.15, 2b. v.16), each of which is answered in a block of teaching (2a' vv.17-28, 2b' vv.29-36). Jesus brings God's rule to bear in a ministry of *release* (4:14) to a man with a demon that rendered him speechless. One group says the power is not from above, thus Jesus works for the devil, is a magician and false prophet (v.15). A second group wants extra credentials in the form of a heavenly sign before they consent. Both groups, the hostile and the skeptical, receive challenging responses from Jesus who is God's lamp put on public display (v.33). Not to welcome his life and works is to mark oneself as filled with inner darkness (vv.34-36). Jesus' preaching and deeds are what God offers. The Gentiles are open (vv.29-32), why not God's own people? It's time to repent, lest at the end those same Gentiles serve to announce God's final condemnation. Jesus acts and speaks for God!

The opening exorcism (/Mt. 9:32-34, Q) is presented as a characteristic activity of Jesus as the kingdom of God in the Spirit's power displaces the kingdom of evil, darkness and torment. Jesus is a spiritual warrior come to release captives in acts of compassion and previews of the new world where the faithful are made whole. Diagnosis and engagement (v.14a, "Now he was casting out a demon that was dumb") is followed by a cure (v.14b, "when the demon had gone out") and two evidences (v.14c, "the dumb man spoke, and the crowd marveled"). The demon is identified by its effect (dumbness), but not all who cannot speak are hosting the demonic. It could be God's judgment, as on Zechariah (1:20), or just participation in the fallen world (Mk. 7:32). Discernment is required; people and causation are complex.

In the first response Jesus is labeled an underling of Beelzebul (a.k.a. Satan), a deviant to be rejected as *not of God*. It is not his power that's questioned, only it's source. Luke has arranged Jesus' response into three sections (1. vv.17-20, 2. vv.21-23, 3. vv.24-28), each with two parts. As a prophet who *knows their thoughts* (v.17a), Jesus' teaching on demonic operations is divine medicine to heal his opponents blindness, but only if they repent. That he takes time to teach is merciful. Jesus' first response (vv.17-18) uses a proverb about divided kingdoms and royal households to argue Satan would never compromise his realm from within; there is no civil war in the demonic household. Jesus does not operate from within that world but from outside as a belligerent, as do other Jewish exorcists and his own disciples (v.19). The punch line is v.20, because if Jesus' is God's bare finger touching broken people, then the ultimate reality has already shown up at their doorstep. Jesus uses logic and imagery to reach deep into heart and mind. His second response (vv.21-23) opens with a vivid picture (one thinks of current video games) of an armed evil lord in his fortified fortress guarding his plunder. He is then assaulted by a stronger opponent who strips away the armor and takes the spoils. This is Jesus' image for his own work; he is God's *Delta Force* to free hostages. And if we are not with him in the great liberation, we are against him and his re-gathering of God's lost sheep. Jesus is a choice. The final response (vv.24-28) indicates exorcism alone is not enough. The newly freed must be filled with a new reality if squatters are not to return. Siding with Jesus, being filled with the Spirit, and obeying God's Word are crucial for freedom.

The demand for more credentials is answered in b' vv.29-36 where Jonah and the queen of Sheba are invoked. Gentiles responded to the wisdom of preaching, so why not God's own people when one greater than Jonah and Solomon is here? For some there can never be enough evidence. Jesus is God's bright lamp (v.33). Whether you see him says nothing about him and everything about you (vv.34-36)!

DISCIPLES GET IN ON THE BATTLE

“He casts out demons by Beel-zebul, the prince of demons.”

They admit Jesus’ power but question its source.

LUKE 11:15

My favorite Supreme, and I don’t mean the 60’s girl group but the Supreme Court, is Antonin Scalia. He’s smart, he’s Catholic, he hits issues head on with large doses of common sense and humor. I was intrigued by an interview he gave to Jennifer Senior in *New York* magazine last October. After mentioning his belief in a real heaven and hell, Scalia suddenly interjected, "I even believe in the Devil."

“You do?” she asked.

“Of course!” he said, ‘Yeah, he’s a real person

“Have you seen evidence of the Devil lately?”

“You know, it’s curious,” he replied. “In the Gospels, the Devil is doing all sorts of things. He’s making pigs run off cliffs, he’s possessing people and what not. And that doesn’t happen very much anymore ... It’s because he’s smart.

“So what’s he doing now?” she asked.

“What he’s doing now is getting people not to believe in him or in God. He’s much more successful that way.... I mean, c’mon, that’s the explanation for why there’s not demonic possession all over the place. That always puzzled me. What happened to the Devil, you know? He used to be all over the place. He used to be all over the New Testament. What happened to him? He got wiler.”

“Isn’t it terribly frightening to believe in the Devil?”

“You’re looking at me as though I’m weird. My God! Are you so out of touch with most of America, most of which believes in the Devil? I mean, Jesus Christ believed in the Devil! It’s in the Gospels! You travel in circles that are so, so removed from mainstream America you’re appalled anybody would believe in the Devil! Most of mankind has believed in the Devil, for all of history. Many more intelligent people than you or me have believed in the Devil.”¹

¹ Jennifer Senior, "In conversation: Antonin Scalia," *New York* (10-6-13).

See what I mean? The man's a regular flamethrower!

In her book *All Is Forgiven*- now twenty years old but still relevant, Jewish scholar Marsha Witten argues that *sentimentality* is the common ground between conservative and liberal Protestants. After analyzing forty-seven sermons on the Prodigal Son by Southern Baptists (the conservatives) and Presbyterians (the more liberal end of the scale; she could just as easily have used United Methodists) she concludes that most sermons portray God in psychological and therapeutic terms: accessibility, generosity, tolerance, sympathy, openness. In the sermons of *both camps*, a sentimental Jesus ever lives to deliver us of bad feelings.² But the biblical Jesus lives to deliver us from spiritual evil and moral blindness and final judgment. Casting out demons was a major component of his work, and he had the bad manners to do it in public! God's kingdom was drawing close enough for its effects to be felt and seen.³ It was a battle, and to the victor went the spoils. James Kallas, a Lutheran scholar, wrote forty years ago that seeing Jesus as *spiritual warrior* is convincing:

“If we see the work of Jesus as the defeat of Satan’s grip on this world, then suddenly the life, work, death and resurrection of Jesus assumes an impressive unity. He begins the fight with Satan in the exorcisms and healings, attacks Satan where he is strongest... in the realm of death by bringing them back to life... and then himself shatters death as the ultimate weapon of Satan.... The life of Jesus... is a cohesive, closely knit ascending battle which reaches its climax in the resurrection.”⁴

Our fascination with a *sentimental Jesus* instead of the *warrior Jesus* is our making him over in the image of our obsessions, part of a larger cultural project to reduce everything to the individual and their subjectivity; in other words, *It's all about me*, as when a young pop star gushes, “I’m feeling so much better about me these days.” Beware of a *sentimental Jesus*. He’s more than good vibrations.

² Matthew Woodley, “How well do you know Jesus?” *Good News*, May/June 99, www.goodnewsmag.org/magazine/may-jun/mj99woodley.htm.

³ For a current historical defense, see C.F. Evans, “Jesus and Exorcism,” in Darrell L. Bock, editor, *Who Is Jesus* (New York, NY: Howard Books, 2012), 79-92.

⁴ “Thoughts on the Kingdom,” *Good News*, Jan/Feb. 99, www.goodnewsmag.org/magazine/jan-feb/jf99quotable.htm. Also “What Is The Kingdom of God?” www.vineyardusa.org/site/articles/matt-croasmun.

Jesus is a spiritual warrior taking the battle to enemy territory and freeing captives. Being a disciple means joining in this messy work. Getting the demon out of the speechless man was easy when compared with convincing his critics he was not a magician or sorcerer and not about to perform parlor tricks for their entertainment. This pitiful man was spiritually compromised, but the critics were shot through with another, more-serious problem. They were inwardly blind; they couldn't and wouldn't see that the God of Israel, their God, was at work in this upstart prophet from Nazareth. The cure for the demonized man was a *power encounter* in which Jesus evicted the squatter; he took authority, and it had to leave. The cure for the critics was of a different kind; it was a *truth encounter* in which Jesus both reasoned with them and warned them. He counseled them from a place of truth; his every word was from above and crafted to give light and pierce their hearts. Spiritual blindness, spiritual hostility, and spiritual infestation are all classic strategies of the Evil One, though they require different responses. Human beings are multi-level and highly complex, so both sophistication and discernment are required. With one Jesus was an exterminator, with another a professor of spiritual theology.

When I sit down with someone who's hearing voices, my first thought is, "Has anyone introduced them to Jesus?" My second thought is, "They need a psychiatrist," so I make a referral. And if the voices go away with medicine, bingo! It's brain chemistry- at least I part, and I'm relieved.⁵ But if they don't recede, and if in a later interview I learn about occult involvement and find several entry points or phenomena, something more may be involved, so we pray a different way in addition to using medical resources. People are multi-layered and highly complex; you have to use the best of several approaches to piece together a picture, and all the time you're praying, "Lord Jesus, give us light. This precious person needs help." I try to keep my radar up and my senses on alert when I meet with people, especially if I receive what I call *a nudge from the Lord*. They're made in God's image; Christ died and rose to free them; sin and bad decisions have damaged them; their defenses may have been breached; I must pay attention and love them as I can, hopefully with a team of others. And then, guess what? Things happen, enough to keep me going.

TURNING TO THE TEXT

A Provocative Public Action (v.14)

⁵ A good read is Matthew S. Stanford, Ph.D., *Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness* (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica, 2008).

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Verse 14 is written matter-of-factly, as if this was the sort of thing Jesus did routinely, which in fact he did, “Now he was casting out a demon that was dumb; when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke, and the people marveled.”⁶ There was a definite *before* and *after*; he couldn’t speak, then he could; people were impressed. The inability to speak might be God’s judgment as with Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, for his not believing the promise of an angel⁷; or, as is most common, simply the effects of living in a fallen world through disease or injury; or still another option: the oppression of a spirit whose speciality it was to shut people away in silence. There is apparently a specialization of function with fallen angels as well as the loyal ones. We all live in a fallen world with its many effects- which is what medicine and social work address, but in some cases it’s more than that because each of us also has a constant relationship with the unseen world, as our first baptismal promise reminds us, “Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness?”⁸ That’s the first thing we want to know: Which side are you on?

My experience confirms the biblical perspective on two points. First, that we are vulnerable creatures, and that because we are more than physical we have the capacity to relate to God and the invisible world. More is happening than we see. The goal is to know Jesus Christ as Lord and be so filled with the Spirit that you have an internal resources more than equal to any outside pressure. The alternative is not to know Christ and to take the risk of being compromised. Yes, I believe that some folk carry around visitors with them, what I call *critters*. If you build a house of sin, don’t be surprised if someone comes to live in it to make the sin worse and deepen the bondage. Empty houses in tough neighborhoods become crack dens; unsavory people move in!⁹ And if you evict them, you must put someone better in

⁶ For a scholarly treatment, see Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Peabody, MASS: Hendrickson, 1993) and his later *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007). On practice, see Francis McNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1995) and Charles H. Kraft, *Two Hours to Freedom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 2010). Also N.S. Lane, editor, *The Unseen World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996) for scholarly essays on angels, demons, heaven and the supernatural.

⁷ 1:20

⁸ *U.M. Hymnal*: 34.

⁹ The image is from Luke Johnson, *Luke* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 184, “It is the empty tenement that invites squatters.”

or they'll soon come back with more friends, just as Jesus warned. Spiritually empty people are easy prey for dark spirits looking for a vehicle through which to express their hatred of God and those who bear the divine image as icons. So after someone is delivered, they must be filled with the Spirit and obey God's Word and live in fellowship if they are to stay free. All the old doors must be shut!¹⁰

Which brings me to my second point of agreement; involvement with supernatural evil always diminishes created human capacity. Nobody messes with the dark side and comes away untouched. This is why the Scripture is totally opposed to all involvement with the occult and to religious experimentation outside the Christian tradition. Go where demons concentrate, and you may pick up one. The work of Satan is to mar and deface the work of God, and since we alone of all God's creatures are made in God's image, human beings are where the action is.

God gave the power of speech; a spirit took it away. This man could no longer praise God or testify. He was isolated, his thoughts trapped within; communication was difficult. A part of him was paralyzed. But when Jesus came near, the raw power of God's love through the Holy Spirit expelled the invader. What was *in him* was not as strong as what was *in Jesus*. One of the common after effects of deliverance- when it is necessary- is the restoration of lost capacity: the capacity to give and receive love, the capacity to pray and hear from God in Scripture, the capacity to resist old temptations, even a physical restoration. Jesus makes us fully human again; we are set free. Jesus did not make him younger or taller or richer or more intelligent or better looking, or any of those things our culture values. Jesus removed a block to his essential humanity. Evil freezes humanity in distorted postures; the love of Jesus warms and thaws and heals. What a marvelous reality.

It's simply wrong to say that Jesus was a man of his times who saw all illness as demonic. It's just not so and highly prejudicial. If the issue is sin, the healing method is confession, forgiveness and repentance. If the cause is demonic, the cure is deliverance, or, in some rare cases endurance if God chooses not to deal with it immediately. And if the cause is our universal participation in a fallen creation, there are again two options: 1) miraculous healing, and 2) medical care, both of which come from God the Creator. My professor Dr. Charles Talbert sums up the situation:

¹⁰ For a brief treatment of entry points, see James Goll, *The Beginner's Guide to Signs, Wonders, and the Supernatural Life* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2010), Chapter 10, "He Sets The Captives Free," 168-182.

“Given the multiple causes of sickness attested by scripture, it takes discernment to know what is the cause in any given situation, what is the proper avenue of cure, and whether God wishes to heal at a spiritual, emotional, and physical levels, all in the here and now, or whether he wishes to save the physical healing until the resurrection.”¹¹

Thus from the Bible we can build a rather sophisticated model to understand and respond to the needs of people. In this case Jesus did not call on the man to confess and repent as he was not liable; neither did he sent him to a physician. The issue was spiritual in the narrow sense, and in the power of the Spirit Jesus set him free by expelling the intruder! A faithful church has many tools; we need them all.

I believe that the day of *either/or* and false alternatives is over. We are a *both/and* people, both medicine *and* the use of prayer with the authority given to us as Christians.¹² Let the church again become a place of integration where all God’s avenues of grace are welcomed and celebrated. I anoint the sick and pray for healing; I administer confession and forgiveness; I counsel and teach; I pray for deliverance; I also say to people, “Your problem is not spiritual but organic; go see a doctor or psychiatrist for some helpful meds and advice on nutrition and lifestyle.” I am free to use all God has given and apologize for none of it.

The First Hostile Response (vv. 15, 17-27)

Miracles can be a catalyst to faith, but they do not necessarily lead to faith. If a healing or deliverance was to happen in church this morning, observers would be divided. Some would praise God; others would be skeptical and says things like, “It’s all psychological anyway.” Some would even be offended and accuse the preacher of being a charlatan. Spiritual power is inherently ambiguous and admits of more than one explanation. Jesus’ critics had no problem believing the man had been demonized or that the invader was now gone. They shared this world view with Jesus. They just believed in this instance that it was a trick of the devil and that the power was not from God. They said so publicly, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul,

¹¹ For the analysis and quote, see his *Reading Luke* (New York: Crossroads, 1982), 135-137. See the chart at the bottom of the Scripture sheet (3) for a summary of options.

¹² For a helpful treatment by a Vineyard pastor that avoids false polarities, see Rich Nathan and Insoo Kim, *Both-And: Living The Christ-Centered Life In An Either-Or World* (Downer’s Grove, ILL: IVP, 2013).

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the prince of demons.”¹³ They, in effect, accused him of being a sorcerer or magician, one who knows how to manipulate dark spiritual powers with incantations, charms and rituals.¹⁴ One way to deal with Jesus and gain control over him was to *label him* as a false prophet, a deviant to be avoided.¹⁵

In framing a response Jesus did not cast out of them a demon of ignorance. There wasn't one! And I can find no evidence of anger, as if Jesus' feelings were hurt by being misrepresented. The likelihood is that he did not hear their words as they were muttered under their breath somewhere in the crowd, but Luke says plainly that he *knew their thoughts*. The same Spirit that empowered him in the exorcism whispered to him what some were saying. The irony is clear. The say he's a false prophet, and then he reads their minds. His response is to teach them, to engage them publicly in debate so as to point out their inconsistencies and offer an alternative explanation. Jesus tries to convince and convert them. We have thus shifted from a *power encounter* with a demon to a *truth encounter* with a hostile audience. This too is the mercy of God reaching out to draw people into the circle of the kingdom.

As a good teacher Jesus starts out with a proverb, with common knowledge. Everyone knows that a civil war decimates a kingdom and a feud destroys a household: verse 17: “But he, *knowing their thoughts* (as a prophet), said to them, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls.’” He then applies the common ground he has established to the illogical nature of their charge against him, “And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand?” Why would Satan give someone power to free his own captives? “Doesn't make a lick of sense,” says Jesus, whose pattern was to cast out spirits and challenge bad theology through good teaching. He moved from deliverance to debate with ease. Jesus teaches that Satan has a kingdom, a reach of effective authority he's interested in protecting and extending. The clash is *between* the kingdoms, not within

¹³ See Sharon Beekman & Peter Holt, *Silencing Satan*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), “Beelzeboul,” 121-122.

¹⁴ On sorcery, see Clinton Arnold, *Powers of Darkness* (Downer's Grove, ILL: IVP, 1992), Part 1 “First Century Belief in the Powers,” 19-86.

¹⁵ This charge was current well into the second century. In *Dialog 69* of his *Dialog with Trypho*, Justin Martyr, speaking of the Jews, says, “For they dared call him a magician and a deceiver of the people.” “Magician” and “deceiver of the people” (i.e. false prophet) are parallel terms of derision for one understood to be outside the central stream of Jewish tradition.

them. “You’ve got my employer wrong,” said Jesus, “I don’t work for him. I work for the One he rebelled against long ago.”

Jesus’ second ploy is against their inconsistency. If he does it with the devil’s power, what about their own exorcists? Why aren’t they charged in the same fashion? He then offers an alternative explanation, “What if this really is God operating through me?” Verse 20, “But if it is by the naked finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” “You are not logical, or consistent,” said Jesus, “but what if, just what if this is God, and what if I am his living finger- his touch point; what then? It would mean you are not speaking for God but speaking a lie, a deadly lie since you label the work of God as the work of evil.” Those who were at first confident in their diagnosis of Jesus’ power source and not so sure any more. The tables are turned, and now they are on the defensive. We always lose, and thus paradoxically win, when we debate with Jesus.

But Jesus goes beyond exposing their foolishness. In the next section of his unfolding argument, verses 21-23, he invites them to see things as he sees them, which is an amazing invitation. Again he starts with a proverb to establish common ground. When the palace of a king is well guarded, everything within the perimeter- his riches and his people- are at peace. But when attacked by a hostile superior force, what happens? They breach the defenses, invade the house, capture everyone and display the king’s armor as a symbol of their victory. Jesus is the aggressor, and by God’s Spirit is stronger than his foe. Martin Luther knew it, “The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him. His rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him.”¹⁶ This is how Jesus saw himself, as a guerilla warrior breaking through Satan’s defenses and rescuing the POW’s. The spoil is people, precious people who need to be set free. And we have forgotten how to do this. We’ve lost both the spiritual fire and accumulated wisdom of our Methodist forebears who knew all about this stuff.¹⁷ We’ve lost touch with the Spirit and with the power that comes from having the heart and the eyes of Jesus. Where Christianity is advancing around the world, signs and wonders are a part of the package. Our culture is fascinated with the supernatural. Just the other night Lori remarked to me, “What is it with all this weird supernatural stuff on TV.” My reply? When the church ignores its treasures, the culture goes looking elsewhere.

¹⁶ *U.M. Hymnal*: 110.

¹⁷ See *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley* for May 2, 1739 and June 15, 1739 for remarkable stories of deliverance, the later regarding 26 people!

So for a second time Jesus made the consequences clear, “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.” Part of the answer or part of the problem? He reasons, he challenges; he reasons again, he challenges again. “This is God’s kingdom breaking in,” he says, “join with us!” Jesus is after conversion; he aims to turn lying enemies into fast friends. He wants them to know the joy of setting people free instead of merely arguing about religion. He likes the way he does it rather than the way they talk about it.

The third section, verses 24-28, is full of pastoral applications for the care of persons after initial deliverance. My own experience is that people need time and care after such an encounter with Christ. It takes time to integrate the new freedom into their life. Counseling which was often unproductive before deliverance will often be much more effective afterwards. Now because the expulsion of spirits is such a dramatic ministry with immediate results, we might be tempted to see it as a total solution, which it is not. The house, meaning the person, cannot just be left empty and clean; spic and span is not enough. The person must come under the lordship of Jesus Christ, be baptized if they have not, be filled with the Holy Spirit, and learn the mental, spiritual and moral disciplines that keep them free. Setting someone free is step one, helping them stay free is a life long discipline of progressive sanctification. Persons who have been compromised by spirits often have a host of other problems that are not fixed in a moment. They need the church family to welcome them, to love and help them find their way to wholeness a day at a time. And if these things are not attended to, and if there is no follow up, what may happen is that they end up worse off than when the whole process started. But now their hearts are hardened, “I tried Jesus and it didn’t last. I’m going back to my old ways.” It is much harder to reach them the second time.¹⁸

Teaching people to obey God in the details of life is the key to freedom. A woman from the crowd praised Mary as the one who gave Jesus life in the womb and nourishment at her breast, but Jesus corrected her sharply, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.” An open Bible and a life submitted to Jesus Christ are the only way to keep free of demonic compromise. Holes in souls must be filled with the mortar of Christian character.

A church which has something more than a *feel-good* gospel or a *be-nice* message or a *come help our institution* mindset will be at least as messy as the scene

¹⁸ See Hebrews 6:3-8 for a sobering pastoral warning about the back-slidden.

before us. The power of God is controversial. Ask the Charismatics and the Pentecostals; they've been dealing with it for years. And the fact is that they all, yes all of them, have Wesleyan and Holiness roots. They were our offspring, and now they are our teachers. Yes there are abuses, but that is no reason for not learning the correct use of all that God's given us.¹⁹ It takes a mature church to coach people from bondage to sin and evil all the way to spiritual maturity. The same person who initially needs deliverance may later need psychiatric care, marriage counseling, parenting training and a new set of friends in addition to Bible study and access to holy communion. People are multi-layered, and Scripture acknowledges this complexity by refusing to give us a *one size fits all* option. We remain forever dependent on Jesus Christ. If he doesn't *show up* and *show us*, nothing happens.

Yes, we do have an invisible foe who has a kingdom, a well-honed strategy for human misery, and many helpers who have been at this work a long, long time. So to be *at peace* does not necessarily mean you are in the right kingdom. Many who live under Satan's control and who are headed for ultimate destruction with him live lives of outward prosperity and peace. It's because they're living *within* his sphere of influence, so why should he bother with them? He already owns them. Keep them fat and happy and they may never awaken to their perilous condition. The battle is at the edge where the kingdoms clash, not at the centers. So when someone says to me, "I'm not a Christian, and my life is just fine," I know something they don't know. "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, *his goods are a peace...*" Think about that one. It can be quite peaceful in a jail cell. Just because life seems OK does not mean you're living in a safe place.

In Jesus we have both an example of spiritual warfare and much teaching about the way things really work in the invisible angelic realm. That he shared this with ones who accused him of being a magician is testimony to his grace and love for his enemies, his desire that boneheads get another chance. If someone accused me of being a minister of the devil, I don't know that I'd explain everything the way Jesus did. Jesus had no ego investment; I on the other hand....

The Second Unbelieving Response (vv. 16, 29-36)

A second group that witnessed the freeing of the dumb man was not openly hostile, though they were openly skeptical. They demanded Jesus prove in an unambiguous

¹⁹ For a review of these issues, see Randy Clark, *The Healing River And Its Contributing Streams* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Global Awakening, 2013).

fashion that his work was from above and not from below: verse 16, “while others, to test him, sought a sign from heaven.” An exorcism is not enough; that a man can now speak is not enough. “We need more proof. Show us something hot. Dazzle us with a miracle in the sky,” is what they said.

In a sense Jesus was harder on this second group than the first. Easier to deal with a hostile opponent than one who makes no commitment. But God does not jump through hoops of our making, and if God did, we’d just keep offering bigger and higher hoops because the issue is not finally insufficient evidence. It is a moral problem of preferring darkness to light. Jesus did not accuse those who said he was of Beelzebul of being evil. Misguided, ignorant, bewildered perhaps, but not yet evil. That title was reserved for those who wanted to turn the living God into a side show and to wave an angry fist at heaven, “I dare you to convince me.” To them Jesus said, “This generation is an *evil* generation; it seeks a sign.”

Jonah preached, and Jesus preached; that is all they will get from God. If the word of God delivered by the Son of God and applied to them by the Spirit of God is not enough, then nothing will work. Their hearts are hard, their eyes closed. And at the end of the age, when they all stand before God, a Gentile queen who long ago came all the way from Arabia to hear Solomon’s wisdom will say, “You idiots! I came all that way to hear Solomon, and you missed Jesus when he was standing right in front of you? How wise is that?” The pagan Ninevites will then add, “We repented when Jonah came to us. Why didn’t you repent when God came in person? And we thought we were lost!” To demand more proofs than God has given, to demand God jump through hoops of my invention, is rank unbelief and worthy of judgment, and in the end the whole universe will laugh at your foolishness.

You see, brother and sisters, it’s very simple: demons have to obey Jesus; human beings don’t, at least not now. We get to listen or not, choose him or not, seek him or not. Grace is amazing and persuasive, even winsome and seductive; it haunts us all our days and nights and works its way into the corners of our lives begging for attention, but it is not irresistible and overwhelming.²⁰ The demons he cast out, but Jesus reasoned with and warned his opponents; he made a strong rational and emotive appeal. Light is meant to shine like a lamp on a stand, and Jesus is the flame God lit before a watching world, so if you don’t see him as the center and goal of life, you

²⁰ On the difference between Arminians (Wesleyans) and Calvinists on this issue see Don Thorsen, *Calvin vs. Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice* (Nashville, 2013), Chapter 4, “Grace: More Preventive than Irresistible,” 44-57.

had better take warning. There is something deeply wrong with you. You don't see the truth. You are spiritually blinded and need to know that there is someone interested in keeping you that way until it's too late. Living merely by the light of your own intelligence and experience is simply not enough to survive. "Therefore be careful," said Jesus, "lest the light in you be darkness."

CONCLUSION

Joseph Lister, from whose name we get the brand name *Listerine*, was a nineteenth century doctor who earned the title *the father of antiseptic surgery*. He was disturbed by the high proportion of patients who died after operations, not because of any problem with the surgery, but from post-operative infections. Lister became convinced that infinitesimal microbes, little critters invisible to the naked eye, were the problem. So he developed a number of antiseptic solutions to treat the wounds. And sure enough, the proportion of patients dying from infections decreased.²¹ It was the first step towards sterile technique. It was quite a job for him to convince his colleagues that something invisible was the problem.

Just because you can't see something doesn't mean it's not there and doing great damage to people. As with Lister and bacteria, so with us and the evil spirits Jesus speaks of so frequently. There is God and the saints above, there is us and the animals large and small on the earth's surface, and there is the normally invisible angelic realm divided between loyalists and traitors, the first our helpers and the second our tormentors. We live on a battlefield, and only at our death are we free from the conflict. This is our comprehensive environment, and learning to deal with all aspects of it is part of Christian maturity. I think I'm going to go with Jesus and the orthodox faith. This modern secular stuff just doesn't explain enough. How about you? What if a really smart Jesus became our teacher as to what's real?

²¹ Stephen Gaukroger, Nick Mercer, *A-Z* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 122.