

 **Main Street**
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Luke 11:14-28
“In The Zone”

March 12, 201
(2nd Sunday in Lent)

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“Following Christ From City Center!”

VIIIE: LUKE 11:14-28 "IN THE ZONE"

Miracle + Controversy Dialog, Bondage // 12:22-30

Action → **1) v.14 PROVOCATIVE ACTION OF JESUS: A PUBLIC DELIVERANCE.** 4:18-19, Life Reclaimed!
 14a And he was casting out a demon that was dumb (mute) 1. Diagnosis + Engagement //Mt. 9:32-34, Named By Effects
 b now it happened that when the demon had **gone out**, 2. Cure: Something left PRINCIPLE 1: Jesus = Freedom
 c the dumb (mute) man spoke, 3a. Evidence 1: Benefit = freedom 7:22, Is. 35:6, Acts 10:38
 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)
 Form: Action + Opposition + 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.
 Smear 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, Smear, Works For Satan, A Deviant!
 → "He casts out demons by Be-elzebul, the prince of demons"; *archon*, PRINCIPLE 2: POWER IS AMBIGUOUS
 7:33, 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. He Is No Magician
 Mk. 3:24-25, Mt. 12:25-30, PRINCIPLE 3: SATAN PRESERVES INFLUENCE

Defense
 17a a But he, *knowing their thoughts*, said to them, 2:35, 5:22, 6:8, 7:39, Jesus = Prophet: *Word of Knowledge*
 b 1 "Every kingdom divided against (upon) itself is laid waste, Logic/Grace = Jesus Teaches His Opponents (1-2//2'-1')
 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, Logic/Absurd, Jesus Not Work From Inside Satan's Kingdom
 Q1 1' how will his kingdom stand?/ Answer = It Won't Allegory 1, Question: Contradiction
 PRINCIPLE 4: THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS ARRIVING
 → b For you are saying that I cast out demons by Be-elzebul. *cast out* (5x), Speaks Of Himself, v.15b Repeated
 19 1 And *if* I cast out demons by Be-elzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Disciples? 9:1-9, 49, 7-20
 Q2 2 (For) Therefore they shall be your judges. 3 *if's* (vv.18, 19, 20), 3 *kingdom's* (vv.17b, 18b, 20b), Acts 19:13ff.
 20 1' *But *if* it is by 'the finger of God' that I cast out demons, * = Punch Line, Old Kingdom Expelled, Don't Miss Out!
 2' then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 10:9, 18, 12:28, Option: Jesus Is The Empowered Agent
 "Finger of God" Ex. 8:19, 31:18, Moses v. 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, G.T. 35, Violent Cosmic Clash! War, Jesus As Commander

21 a1 When a strong man, Allegory 2, Give Him His Due: Strong, Armed, Troops, Takes Hostages
 2 *fully armed, guards his own palace*, Metaphor, PRINCIPLE 5: SPOILS TO THE VICTOR GO
 3 his goods *are in peace*; Military Imagery, Allegory On Security, Turf 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!
 PRINCIPLE 6: NO NEUTRALITY IN THIS FIGHT

23 b *He who is not with me is against me./ Mt. 12:30, 2 Images, v. 9:50, Loyalty = Side 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 Opponents = Grace, Reason, Patience

(3) vv.24-28 The Threat Of And Two-Fold Cure For Demonic Re-Infestation.
 T. Reuben 3:1-8, PRINCIPLE 7: AN EMPTY HOUSE WILL BE FILLED

→
 24 a1 "Whenever the unclean spirit has **gone out** of a man, //Mt. 12:43-45, Tobit 8:3/Baruch 4:35, Deliverance Not Enough
 2 he passes through waterless places seeking rest; Allegory 3, 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, vv.29, 34, 8:2, Communication
 ← 1' and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."/ Filled With Spirit (2)
 PRINCIPLE 8: OBEDIENCE IS BLESSING

Praise
 27 b As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, (L Only) Gen. 49:25, G.T. 79, Mary Blessed
 "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" Synecdoche, 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)

A Brief Treatment Of 11:14-28 (36)

This thought unit is a composite of Q (material in common with Mt. not found in Mark) and L (only in Luke) edited into a cohesive whole (Appendix: 16). As common in Luke (e.g. 5:17-26), a provocative action (1. v.14) is followed by negative response, in this case two (2a. v.15, 2b. v.16), each of which is then answered (2a' vv.17-28, 2b' vv.29-36), so the parallelism is stair step (1-2//1'-2'). Anointed by the Spirit, Jesus brings God's rule to bear in a ministry of *release* (4:16b-20) to a man with a demon that renders him mute. He cannot speak, but afterwards he can, and the crowd marvels. A general group (*some*) asserts that Jesus is in league with the devil— a.k.a. *Beelzebul* (a slur on the Canaanite fertility deity *Baal*, “Lord of the flies”— from the dung heap!); he is a magician and false prophet (v.15, b. Sanh. 43a). A second group (*others*) want additional credentials in the form of an unambiguous sign from heaven before they consent. The hostile and the skeptical both receive challenges from Jesus who is God's lamp on public display (v.33). Not to welcome him is to mark oneself as filled with darkness (vv.34-35), not light (v.36). The Gentiles are open (vv.29-32); why not God's own? It's time to change, lest at the end Gentiles announce God's condemnation. The word *evil* is found in both blocks of teaching as a link and theme word (v.26//vv.29b, 34c). The rest of this analysis deal with the sorcery charge (vv.15, 17-28).

Exorcism is characteristic of Jesus' work as the kingdom of God in the Spirit's power displaces the counter-kingdom of evil and torment. As a warrior, Jesus releases captives in acts of compassion that preview a new world. Diagnosis and engagement (v.14a, “Now he was casting out a demon that was dumb”) is followed by 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, but not all the mute host the demonic; it could be God's judgment, as with Zechariah (1:20), or just participation in the fallen world (Mk. 7:32). Discernment is required; people and causation are complex. It's not a question of whether spiritual power is present; the question is its source: from below? from above? a sign? a deception?

Luke arranges Jesus' response into three sections around the theme of spiritual conflict, each in two parts (1. vv.17-18a + vv.18b-20, 2. vv.21-22 + v.23, 3. vv.24-26 + vv.27-28) and concluding with a punch line (*vv.20, 23, 28). *Gone out* (v.14b) and *household* (v.17b) are echoed in v.24 as inclusions. As a prophet who *knows their thoughts* (v.17a), Jesus' teaching is medicine to heal his opponents' blindness if they repent. That he reasons with the hostile is merciful. Part 1 (vv.17-18, 19-20) opens with a proverb (v.17b) about royal households to argue that Satan does not compromise his own realm, thus no civil war in the dark castle! The charge of v.15 is paraphrased in v.18b. Two questions (vv.18, 19) call for answers. *Kingdom* is used three times (vv.17b, 18a, 20b) as are three conditional *if's* (vv.18, 19a, 20a) to unite vv.17-20. Jesus does not operate from within but from outside as a belligerent, as do his disciples (*your sons*, v.19). The punch line is v.20; if Jesus is God's finger touching broken people, then reality has shown up through an approved agent, and this is what it looks like! Jesus' logic is formidable.

The second response (vv.21-22, 23) opens with an allegory of a well-armed lord in his fortress guarding plunder (i.e. captives). Using imagery from Is. 49:24-25/ 53:12, Luke recasts Mt. 12:29//Mk. 3:29 into two three-line stanzas in vv.21-22: 1//1' = *strong man/one stronger*, 2//2' = *fully armed/takes away armor*, 3//3' = *goods are at peace/divides his spoils*. In Jesus the ancient promises of Isaiah are fulfilled. The foe is assaulted by a stronger opponent who strips away his armor and takes the spoils. This is Jesus' image for his own work; he and his troops are *God's Delta Force!* The punch line (v.23) is a challenge that if we are not with him in the mission, we are against God's re-gathering of his scattered sheep.

Part 3 leads with a second allegory (vv.24-26) of the wandering spirit as a warning and closes with a corrected blessing (vv.27-28) that Luke adds. This two part response (vv.24-26 + vv.27-28) indicates exorcism alone is not enough. The newly freed must side with Jesus (v.23), be filled with light (vv.25, 36), and hear and obey God's word (v.28) to remain free. Siding with Jesus, being filled with the Spirit, and obeying God's Word are crucial for freedom. Blessing is not biology but obedience!

GROUND LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE

*“But if it by the ‘finger of God’ that I cast our demons,
then the kingdom of God has come upon you!”*

One of Jesus’ most revealing claims.

L U K E 1 1 : 2 0

In sports and other forms of high level performance— say music or theater or writing— it’s known as *the zone*. It’s when it all comes together: the talent, the work and preparation, the gifts and focus coupled with release. Performers are at a heightened level of consciousness; they live fully in the moment and have a nearly mystical sense that what happens is *through* them rather than *by* them and that they are caught in something larger than themselves. One sports psychologist describes it this way:

“The zone, as a state of supreme focus, helps athletes in all sports perform at their peak potential. It is when your mind fully connects with achieving a goal, such as getting a hit, or stealing a base. Attention is absorbed into the present- the here and now only. In the zone your mind only processes the thoughts and images that help you execute your task successfully.”¹

Think Michael Phelps in the water, Tiger Woods ten years ago; think of Josh Groban singing, Ali boxing or Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds dancing in the 1952 musical *Singing in the Rain*. It’s magic because they are so often in *the zone*, performing at an insanely high level as it were perfectly natural.

Now at a lesser level I know what *the zone* feels like. It’s when I’ve been

¹ www.sportpsychologytoday.com/youth-sports-psychology/understanding-the-zone-in-sports.

so immersed in a passage of Scripture for a week that insights flow out of me without much reference to the written manuscript. I say stuff I hadn't planned to say, and sometimes it feels as if I'm listening to someone else speak. An altered state of consciousness is effected, and I hope it's the Holy Spirit at work making me focused and self-forgetful at the same time.

But my two greatest memories of *the zone* are not vocational but athletic, one at age eleven, the other in my mid-thirties, the first on a diamond, the second on the links, and on neither occasion can I tell you what happened. I never saw it coming. We were in the middle of Little League season in 1964. Across the chest of my uniform was our sponsor: *Kiwanis*. I was playing third and to my left at shortstop was Billy Weed, the human vacuum cleaner who in the early 70's was all-conference at Wofford. At my first at bat I swung hard and heard a solid crack. As I headed towards third the assistant coach waved me in, and the throw from the left field line bounced to the catcher just after I crossed the plate. A home run! The whole team jumped up and hollered. The coach welcomed me to the bench with a handshake and pat on the back, just like the big leagues. I felt better all over than anywhere else. At my second at bat two innings later, the very same thing happened, but this time it rolled all the way to the right field fence. I was in *the zone* and knew it not; it felt so natural to swing hard and keep running. Two innings later I got up again, but this time the fielders played deep. Again a loud crack, but his time the coach held me at third. "So this is what baseball is about," I thought to myself. The fourth time up they walked me, probably the greatest compliment I've ever received. The next game I assumed the magic would return; it did not. I went 1 for 4; the glory was gone. It never returned, but I never forgot. I walked by that same field Friday afternoon after doing my mother's taxes, and guess what I thought about? You guessed it! My one game in baseball heaven.

The second event was in my mid-thirties after I'd planted a new church in Northeast Columbia. We'd gone to Cheraw as a family on Friday, and on Saturday morning my father said, "Let's play a round after lunch," so we did with his best friend Karlo Baker. They rode, I carried. They played the regular tees; I played it back and had a good start, six straight pars with some scrambling. I was pleased; then it happened. *The zone* came upon me. I birdied 7, 8, and 9. We then stopped for a hot dog. I was anxious *the zone* would

evaporate, so I ate quickly and went to the putting green. When we started the back side, it still and quiet. Would it continue? I was glad my dad and his best friend were there. I birded 10, 11 and 12. Everything was long, straight and accurate. All the putts fell. Then it lifted, and I felt it. I double-bogied 13, bogied 14, and parred out for 68. It could so easily have been a 65!

Now I regale you in order to say that *the zone* is not limited to sports or the arts when— on a human level— something nearly magical happens as things converge and you outperform yourself. It also happens in ministry. There you are, prayerfully, dutifully going about your business, to-do list in hand, and then you walk into something, something prepared, a divine appointment. A third party, the Holy Spirit, comes out of hiding, and you are now in *the zone*. Awareness is refined; you’re know something important is happening that draws on all your learning and experience but is not dependent on them. Spiritual gifts are in operation. When I walk in the door at the end of a day and say to Lori, “You won’t believe what happened today!” she’s learned to respond, “Tell me about it,” and the retelling is almost as good as the event itself.

Back in the mid-90's I was serving St. Mark in Charleston. The wife of a young man who owned a prominent men’s store downtown on King Street stopped by the office and said, “My sister’s moving to Charleston. She’s in the middle of a divorce. I hope she’ll be with us Sunday, and you can meet her.” “Sounds good,” I replied, and I remember us taking a moment to pray.

Well, there she was on Sunday, and you could see the resemblance to her sister. About mid-week I had the secretary call and make an appointment to drop by, and I did that afternoon. We sat in the living room, me in an upholstered chair, her on the couch across from me. After serving me a class of iced teach with sprig of mint and some initial small talk, I shifted the conversation, “Tina tells me you’re going through a hard time. I’m willing to listen and help you find a counselor if needed.” I had a great referral network in Charleston. I looked for signs of depression but saw none. She was bright and sophisticated with a hair color not yet found in Charleston.

Her story unfolded in several chapters. Married to a Chinese-American lawyer, fast lane in New York City. Money. Cocaine. Rock-n-roll. Then a trip

back to Hong Kong about a year before to visit his family. While there, he took her to a Tarot Card reader to open up their future. And she did, with remarkable accuracy, I was told. She had absolutely no awareness of what she was involved with, having left the faith and the church as a teenager in a highly dysfunctional family. Two things then happened. The marriage spiraled downward in abuse, and she began having waking visions and dreams of an old hag, like something from a Disney movie. The few times she tried to read her childhood Bible for help, it was if the words moved around on the page. Praying to Jesus was hard. My first thought was mental illness, but her presentation was rational and coherent with a bit of fear mixed in because she was not sure how I'd react to her strange story. And when I said, "This is more common than you think," she relaxed and finished. I was in *the zone*.

This was one of the cases where divorce was necessary, and I asked if she had a lawyer. She did, and there were no children. I then said, "This is a first visit, and you've been remarkably honest, but I need to tell you something. You know that your lifestyle has been destructive and taken a toll, but— from what you tell me— you've ignorantly involved yourself in evil and are experiencing some of the side effects. Whatever this is, it means you no good."

"What do you mean? It was just innocent and fun, like a spooky game."

"I have no doubt that's what you thought. But Scripture forbids us from seeking supernatural information and guidance from occult sources. It's the worship of false gods and leads into the kind of phenomena you describe. Apparently you came back from Hong Kong with a new friend. That you can't read the Bible and have trouble with the name of Jesus is a big clue." I then read a passage from Deuteronomy and one from Leviticus from her Bible on why the occult is forbidden.² She looked shaken, "What can I do? I want her to stop."

"Well, it's not hard, but it does take humility. You confess your foolish sin to Christ and ask his forgiveness for playing on the devil's playground. I will announce pardon to you, and then we will renew your baptismal promises, especially the first, "Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?" and confess the Creed together. Then, having taken away the legal grounds of this problem and re-secured you in the faith, I will command whatever this is to leave you in Jesus'

² Deuteronomy 18:9-16, Leviticus 19:31, 20:6.

name. You then hang out with us at the church and start growing again as a believer. And if you need a counselor to come to terms with the end of your old life, we can find one.”

It was surreal. But that’s how it is in *the zone* when the Holy Spirit takes the lead in the delivery of freedom. I’d intended a brief drop-by call, then on to my next visit. I did not expect *the zone* to open up. I should have taken someone with me, but it never crossed my mind. I knew I needed to be careful. Me sitting in the living room of an attractive young woman listening to a strange story involving the enemy of us all. What would you do?

Well, she confessed her idolatry, drug, and occult involvement to God, and I announced pardon, as I do to you. She reaffirmed her neglected baptismal promises, and we recited the Creed together. From her tone and demeanor she was sincere and sincerely interested in being rid of her house guest, whatever it was that accompanied her home from Hong Kong with fresh legal rights as a spiritual squatter. I then asked, and I don’t now if I’d do the same now, “Can a place my hand on your head?” She stayed seated, and I stood at her side. “In the name of Jesus, I command any and all occult spirits to leave in Jesus’ name.” Then her head spun around and she levitated!

No, nothing of the kind happened. All was still and quiet. No special effects. No Hollywood. We were together in *the zone*, the Lord very near. Dr. Jesus was making grand rounds, and I was his intern. I blessed her in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, asking the Lord to heal her broken history and broken heart. I went back and took my seat. She raised her head and just stared at me. I think I said, “That wasn’t too weird, was it?” She smiled. I then gave what’s known as *post-prayer direction*, “You should experience some relief. Let me know, and if you need more prayer, I can have someone join us.”

“That would be good.”

With a statement of great understatement I said, “This has been an interesting visit. You may want to tell Tina what happened, but beyond her, let’s keep it quiet for now. I did not want to be known as *Rev. Ghostbuster!*”

She chuckled. As I sat in car I said out loud, ‘What just happened in there?’ The thought came back, “She was spiritually ill, and we made a house call. It’s a promotion, so get ready!” I felt I’d been addressed. On Sunday I

pulled her aside with her sister. The dreams and sightings had stopped; she could read her Bible and speak Jesus’ name in love. Her heart felt lighter, and the house itself felt free and open. We were both encouraged.

I wish I could tell you it went well after that, but only for a short time. She thrived as long as she was near family and in the church, but then moved to Florida and disconnected again without the external supports. About a year ago I spoke to her brother in law who’s now a pastor. His report was not good; it was bad on every level, and I felt sick in my stomach. Jesus was right about an empty house needing to be filled with a new presence and guarded by hearing and doing God’s Word lest “the last state of the woman becomes worst than the first.” This incident does not qualify for the stronger term *exorcism* but only the lesser category of a minor deliverance, more like getting your teeth cleaned than major reconstruction. Valuable and necessary as *the zone* is, it’s only the beginning. There are no quick fixes; all recovered freedoms need to be guarded and strengthened. My observation is that care and counseling often work best after we get rid of the garbage and deal with the rats.³

The goal in all this is to keep the good things on the inside and the bad on the outside. Say you get an infection, an invading bacteria in a cut. The doctor makes a diagnosis and shoots at it with the bullet of an antibiotic, and if it’s the right, it goes away; if not, they try another. Bacteria is defeated and expelled; but an overly ripe appendix or a malignancy is excised. A poor neighborhood is infested with drug dealers, so the police move in for a sweep. On an international scale a country invades its neighbor, say Iraq into Kuwait. Armies are sent to push them out. Your house has vermin; you hire an exterminator. The pattern of the active replacement of evil with good is deeply woven into life because the goal is to keep the good things on the inside and the bad on the outside. And whenever we stop pushing back, we lose ground precisely because we all live on a battleground all the time.

Think about it. At this moment your immune system is silently fending

³ An insight of Dr. Charles Kraft. For his theology and method, see his *The Evangelical’s Guide to Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker/Chosen, 2015), especially Chapter 12, “Inner Healing Before Deliverance,” 198-209.

off intruders, and if could see the individual engagements, you'd think you were watching a video combat game. Tagging immune cells to attack certain cancers is the new war game, and we are now getting pictures of the one consuming the other! At another level of challenge, also unseen- but for a different reason- someone is probing your defenses and looking for an opening. Each of us is under surveillance and being scouted. So when we hear of incidents like the one I just shared, do not be skeptical. We need all the tools of the trade in our bag: medicine for illness, counseling for insight, healing community as a safe place to process life, prayer and spiritual direction for a deeper life, Scripture for truth, and sometimes *the zone* and several of its specialized weapons for spiritual fumigations. I do not want to major in this area, but I've had enough encounters to keep the tools in my pastoral bag, and during this series, "A Glimpse of the Dark Side," I'll share several with you. It's an encouragement to me that John Wesley's *Journals* are peppered with such strange incidents, which he typically describes almost as lab reports.⁴ This one is from April 2, 1752:

“After preaching in the evening I was desired to visit a person who had been an eminent scoffer at all religion, but was now, they said, 'in a strange way.' I found her in a strange way indeed, either 1) raving mad or 2) possessed of the devil (Note his distinction in categories). The woman herself affirmed that the devil had appeared to her the day before, and, after talking some time, leaped upon and grievously tormented her ever since. We prayed with her. Her agonies ceased; she fell asleep, and awakened in the morning calm and easy.”⁵

Thus far I've made two moves. First I introduced the metaphor of *the zone* with several stories from my glory days. I then a moved to *the zone* as a window into another kind of contest— a spiritual one— and illustrated it with one of my most memorable engagements from two decades ago. My third move is

⁴ Daniel R. Jennings, *The Supernatural Occurrences Of John Wesley* (Sean Multimedia, 2005), Chapter 2, “John Wesley’s Experience With Spiritual Warfare,” 8-37.

⁵ wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-journal-of-john-wesley-vol-4/the-ninth-part-section-one; also Jennings, 35.

to use the phenomena of *the zone* as an insight into the regular, daily activities of Jesus, whom— we might say— was always in *the zone* as the obedient Son of the Father and the willing partner of the Holy Spirit. We visit *the zone*; he lived there in communion with the Father and Holy Spirit. The Son laid aside the privileges of deity and assumed frail human flesh in Jesus, and it is in that voluntary limitation, that emptying of privilege, that he obeys the Father’s voice and trusts in the Spirit’s energies to make things happen because he was powerless on his own, which for many of us is a new thought. Every word and every healing touching came from the Father to the waiting Son who did what he saw, and when he obeyed, the Spirit supplied the juice. Jesus lived in trust, and his empty hands were filled with divine gifts at every intersection; it became his habit of life. It’s what made the cross so hard as the experience of *felt presence* was replaced by *felt absence*, “Why have you forsaken me?”

Can you imagine the accuracy of Jesus’ intuitive diagnostics? To know by direct divine revelation what’s wrong, to hear the Father’s voice with ease. Not to know the medical terms, because it was unnecessary, but to have painted on the mind’s eye an image, as he announced in John, “Truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he *sees* the Father doing, for whatever he does, the Son does likewise.”⁶ That’s nothing but show and tell, the mimicry of see and do. Jesus in effect says, “This is how I work.”

And so it was with the anonymous man before us today. Physically, the man could not speak. But the cause was not organic. Perhaps he’d been dedicated to a pagan god as a newborn, and this was one of the prices exacted.⁷ Jesus saw the problem; the man had an unwelcome spiritual guest which Jesus sent packing, likely with a word of command, and the results are two: the man spoke, the crowd was stunned. Jesus means freedom, and his view of the human person includes the capacity not only for physical illness but for spiritual affliction in differing degrees. The first three gospels carry seven different accounts as well as numerous summaries, so the impression is this was

⁶ John 5:19.

⁷ For a contemporary example of such, see Lyle Story, “Jesus ‘Enemy’ In The Gospels,” *American Theological Inquiry* (Online), 6, No. 1, Jan 15, 2013.

everyday, normal stuff for Jesus and his followers to deal with.⁸ Lots of occult, lots of idolatry, lots of spells and pacts and magical practices; paganism and polytheism was everywhere. We get epidemics of flu and STDs; they had many openings for the demonic, which in our day are returning with a vengeance. As the more powerful party, Jesus expelled the demon, literally kicked it out as an intruder. You may not know this, but every Roman Catholic diocese has an approved, trained exorcist and the vetting process for getting a session approved by the local bishop is strict, requiring both medical and psychiatric exams before such is allowed. They and the Pentecostals know more about this stuff than anyone. I've read several books by the chief exorcist of Rome, and they are much better than any of the raft of recent movies, including *The Rite* and *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*.

Now when there is a public act of spiritual power as dramatic as this one, the question is not, Has power been demonstrated? but rather, Where did it come from? Power itself is ambiguous. So when I hear a report of someone healed through Tarot or Spiritism or another unapproved source, I don't get too excited because I know a high price is attached. A bit of relief is offered in exchange for life long bondage, so stay away from such promises and practitioners. Now because Jesus was so unconventional and did not come with approved credentials, the easiest explanation for his extraordinary power as an exorcist was that he was really one of the devil's own agents and that it was just trickery and magic to deceive the ignorant masses and gain a following, thus the slander of verse 15, "He cast our demons *by Bezebul*, the prince of demons," with Beelzebul being— in effect— a bathroom slur term for Satan, "Lord of the flies,"

⁸ 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; also 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).

“Lord of the dung heap” if you want the full effect.⁹ An ugly name. So is Jesus the great liberator, or is he the enemy in disguise?

What comes next in the three paragraphs of vv.17 through 28 is pure gold since Jesus is using both logic and analogies about how the dark side of the unseen world operates, it’s literally a peek behind the curtain into the dark side. “But he,” says Luke, and then these words, “*knowing their thoughts*, said to them...,” and with that phrase Luke cues us that Jesus is in *the zone* with their secrets being revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. Paul calls this *a word of knowledge*,¹⁰ and it’s more common than you know. I call them *holy hunches* because it seems less threatening to people, but our God is still speaking and often giving his agents clues as to how to proceed. Many of you have had such hunches or insights; you just didn’t know what to call them. But Jesus knew the voice, and with the voice came a strategy, which was to reason with his opponents. It’s an example of divine patience and kindness in the face of personal slander. He reasons with them, because the same Spirit that inspired the man’s deliverance now inspires Jesus’ debate with his enemies, and if they listen, they too can be freed from a wrong appraisal of who he is.

Jesus starts, as the wise often do in oral cultures, with a proverb, a wisdom saying, and so whether it’s a realm with a king or an extended household or clan with a family leader, internal conflict is devastating. Civil wars and family feuds destroy such governments. The realm is laid waste; the family falls. They all knew this. But then Jesus draws out the insight:

“If I am an agent of the Evil One, as you think, and yet I am freeing people from his bondage, is not his kingdom under attack from within? And if my disciples, your own Jewish sons and brothers

⁹ See Sharon Beekman & Peter Holt, *Silencing Satan*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), “Beelzeboul,” 121-122. 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” (false prophet) are terms of derision for one understood to be outside the central stream of Jewish tradition.

¹⁰ 1 Cor. 14:8

and cousins, are doing the same, what power are they using? Are you willing to be consistent and say the same of them? But there is an alternative to consider. You remember the *finger of God* from the Exodus, don't you? It's the phrase Pharaoh's magicians used when they finally admitted where Moses' mighty works came from.¹¹ Well, what if that same *finger of God* is touching the tormented now through me, not to free them from evil Pharaoh but from the Evil One himself? That would mean, would it not, that the rule of my Father, the long anticipated kingdom of God, is breaking out in front of your eyes through me and my friends? Why don't you rejoice in this new thing and join us?"

In the second paragraph, verse 21 through 23, Jesus employs a warfare analogy in which he leads the assault on a walled, heavily armed, well defended palace. Think of Seal Team 6 going after Ben Laden. It's not far off. And in that part of the world— as you can still see today— a home or village or city without walls is defenseless. So Jesus says what they all know, that “When a strong man, full armed, guards his own palace, his good are in peace,” which is an odd way to say they are safe, but if his goods are people, then why are the said to be *in peace* if they are the devil's booty? Well, they do not know they are his captives. Life looks fine and for now he leaves them largely in peace. The happy pagan. The lost person. Those who prosper in crime and immorality. The spiritually blind and the morally indifferent. And since they already belong to him, he doesn't trouble them much. But then comes the assault of Jesus Christ upon such persons as he lays siege to them with love and light because he wants them out of the kingdom of darkness and in the kingdom of light. Verse 22, “...but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides the spoil.”

This is what happens when a person come to Jesus Christ in faith, or any time someone is set free from one of Satan's forms of bondage, say the occult or false religions, say ungodly gains, say thinking of people as disposables. Jesus is not nice and sweet and non-aggressive; this story says he's a Warrior, not a wimp; the leader of an assault team to free hostages, not a teller of sweet

¹¹ 8:19, 31:18.

stories. And so when the demonized man was freed, it was hostage-rescue! More Arnold Schwarzenegger and Rambo than sweet reasonableness. And if you don't like such violent war imagery, I'm sorry. It's a clashing of the kingdoms, the interface of light and darkness. It's what Jesus used to describe his daily work, so take it up with him. And if we are not with him in this mission of hostage rescue, then, he says, we are among the scatterers rather than the gatherers. What if people are not misguided but really lost? In bondage in the dark lord's castle? How would that change the way we see them and the strategies we deploy? What if we asked Jesus to show us how he sees people and their troubles? Would not that be a new day?

It is after this combat story and challenge that Jesus tells one last story, this time using a blend of realism and humor to show just what we are up against and how—once freedom is restored—it must be guarded and kept. An unclean spirit, he says, once evicted, wanders restless since it's goal is to express itself through a human being: no host, no power; no dwelling, no influence. So it says to itself, "I shall return and inspect my our old quarters." And behold, it has a new coat of paint, all signs of former chaos now removed, but it is empty, unfilled, a vacancy sign on the door. Not Jesus as honored guest, no Holy Spirit as an early warning system, no new goods to replace old evils, no new holy habits to cut new grooves into the soul. Just empty and ready, so what does the fiend do? He send out an alert, and soon seven more evil than himself arrive and take over as squatters. And so what is the end of the house that is the man or woman? Jesus said that *the last state of the man becomes worst than the first*. Deliverance from evil is a first step, not a quick fix. The human being was meant to be well furnished with good and holy things, meant to be indwelt by a king and guarded by his Spirit. And this, I fear, is what happened to the woman I visited. The initial meeting emptied the house of vermin, but she never signed an Orkin contract for regular inspections, and while she may still be a believer in some sense, it's been downhill for decades. She's worse off than when I first found her, which demonstrates just how real the struggle is.

Can you imagine the tension among the crowd as Jesus first freed the man and then engaged his opponents in such careful reasoning and in such insightful stories of spiritual warfare and counter-insurgency? It was then that a lone woman in the crowd utter a blessing upon Jesus, that Oh how blessed was

Luke 11:14-28..... 16

Mother Mary, her womb that shaped him and her breast that nursed him, and by praising her she indirectly praised him— as everyone understood. She was right, but the question is not, Is he blessed and free? but, Are we? And so Jesus corrected her, “Blessed and whole and free are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.” Freedom and forgiveness are for obedience. An open Bible and a life submitted to Christ are the only way to keep free of demonic compromise. Holes in souls must be filled with the mortar of Christian character. There must be resources on the inside at least equal to the pressures on the outside, and one of those is the church itself. How different is Luke’s understanding of the faith. Not as watered down. A lot wilder and more dangerous. More like an ongoing war than a garden party. What are we missing?

A SOURCE ANALYSIS OF LUKE 11:14-28

Luke 11:14-28(Q)	Mark 3:22-27	Matthew 12:22-30, 43-45 (Q)
11:14, Exorcism Report Edited by Lk., abbreviated? (Only exorcism in Q)		12:22-23, 9:32-34
11:15, Beelzebul Charge <i>casts out/Beelzebul/prince</i> <i>Some.</i> Edited by Lk.?	3:22 (Same order as Mt.) <i>Beelzebul/prince/cast out</i> <i>scribes</i>	12:24 (Same order as Mk.) <i>Beelzebul/prince/cast out</i> <i>Pharisees</i>
11:16, Demand for sign (L)		
11:17-18a, Divided kingdom? Nearly identical to Mt.	3:23-26 (independent source)	12:25-26 Divided kingdom? Nearly identical to Lk.
11:18b, Repeats charge (L)		
11:19-20, Source of power? Nearly identical to Mt. Agent: “finger of God”		12:27-28, Source of power? Nearly identical to Lk. Agent: “spirit of God”
11:21-22, Assault analogy, Edited by Lk. Echoes of Is. 49:24-25, 53:12 into two 3-line stanzas (1-2-3//1'-2'-3')	Mark 3:27 Nearly identical with Mt.	12:29 Nearly identical with Mk.
11:23, Loyalty test Nearly identical with Mt.		12:30 Nearly identical with Lk.
11:24-26, House allegory Nearly identical with Mt.		12:43-45a Nearly identical with Lk.
11:27-28, Blessing (L)		