

Sermon – Luke 11:14-28 (Lent 3 – 2022)

Let us pray: Lord God, heavenly Father, You have sent Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh, that He might overcome the devil, and defend us poor sinners against the adversary: We give thanks to You for Your merciful help, and we beseech You to attend us with Your grace in all temptations, to preserve us from carnal security, and by Your Holy Spirit to keep us in Your Word in Your fear, that we may be delivered from the enemy, and obtain eternal salvation; through the same, Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever.
Amen

Grace to you and peace, from God, our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

¹⁴ And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled.

¹⁵ But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

¹⁶ Others, testing *Him*, sought from Him a sign from heaven.

¹⁷ But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house *divided* against a house falls.

¹⁸ "If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub.

¹⁹ "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? Therefore they will be your judges.

²⁰ "But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

²¹ "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace.

²² "But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils.

²³ "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

²⁴ "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'

²⁵ "And when he comes, he finds *it* swept and put in order.

²⁶ "Then he goes and takes with *him* seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first."

²⁷ And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed *is* the womb that bore You, and *the* breasts which nursed You!"

²⁸ But He said, "More than that, blessed *are* those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

These are Your Words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by the truth, Your word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed,

Polls from 20 years ago show that the majority of Americans believe in the devil. A lot has changed since then, so I wonder whether that would still be the case today. People must admit that there is evil in the world. How they would describe that evil would be another matter. Is there an evil being such as the devil? Or is evil just a characteristic in the world that you find among human beings?

We can look at the world, see its great evils, slavery, war, genocide, and infanticide. It is clear that the devil is real and is active, and has corrupted God's good creation. But it is not the evil of the world that convinces us that the devil exists. It is Holy Scripture that tells us this and tells us who he is.

Scripture doesn't tell too much about the devil and his demons, but says much about his work.

He has brought about tremendous evil in the world. It started when he deceived Adam and Eve. Sin and death entered the world.

Jesus calls Satan the ruler of the world. Wickedness, destruction, strife, and death are in his wake. He perverts, corrupts, and destroys the goodness of God's creation.

The works of the devil are evident. But let us not think that the works of the devil are out there in the great evils of the world.

The works of the devil are so personal. It was personal for the man in our text. The demon that possessed him had made him mute. Speech is a gift that God has given. The man had that gift, but the demon had destroyed it, taken it away.

The works of the devil are so personal to us. In the heart of every person is a throne. God created us so that our lives would rely upon Him. He made us so that He would occupy that throne. He made us so that He rule in us by His grace, and that we would love Him, and gladly have Him as our God and Lord enthroned in our hearts. Having Him there, we would enjoy the freedom of life as His beloved children.

But with the instigation of the devil, we dethroned God from our hearts. The devil tempted us, **“You will be like God!”** But the problem is that we cannot mount that throne, like a horse cannot mount the saddle that is on his own back. If God is not taking the place of that throne in our hearts, the devil will take that place. Either God will rule the house or the devil will.

This either/or runs throughout Scripture. You are of light or darkness, of satan or God. Jesus said, **“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.”** There is no neutral or middle ground. One is either on team Jesus or on team satan. Either Jesus rules the house or Satan rules the house.

When satan deceived man, he took the saddle. All of man came under his dominion. Thus he is the god of this world. And in his kingdom our lot is bondage to sin, the darkness of unbelief, death and hell.

But Jesus came to do battle for your hearts. He comes as the stronger man to bind the strong man and cast him from our hearts. He came to set up His kingdom, that it may spread and that He may regain His spot in the throne of many who have been under satan’s rule. He says, **“But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.”** In Him, the kingdom of God is come to into the world.

So He goes to battle. The first of the vital battles we heard a couple weeks ago, when Jesus resisted satan’s temptations and emerged from the wilderness with His righteousness intact—the righteousness with which He will clothe you and deliver you. On a Friday in a few weeks, we will hear of another decisive battle that Jesus wins. By His death on His cross, He crushes the devils head, winning for us forgiveness, which frees us from our guilt of dethroning God, and serving the devil. Christ’s final victory will come any moment when He returns in glory, condemning Satan and his demons eternally.

Christ’s battle for you came to bear on you when you were baptized. The devil was cast from your hearts. Your sins were released from you, you were clothed in Christ’s righteousness, and you were stolen away from satan’s kingdom and brought into life in Christ’s kingdom, so that He now rules in your hearts.

The devil still fights, though. Though some of the Jews recognized the devil as the enemy, the devil truly directed their hearts and minds so that they would make such demonic accusations against Christ. Jesus shows Himself to be the enemy of the devil, but they are blind to this and accuse Jesus of being in cahoots with the devil.

He's trying to poke out your spiritual eyes, that you may be as blind as those Jews, and not know the Christ. Sometimes, he possesses an individual like the man in our text, though rare in our parts of the world.

His activity is clear. Take a look at that battle site, that throne for which the devil is fighting. Whenever you are tempted to be your own lord, to be the one riding the saddle, there is the devil behind those temptations. When you are striving to live godly lives, whether it is showing Christian charity and love toward someone, or holding your tongue from gossip and slander, or spending time in God's Word, how easily excuses come up, road blocks, etc. Curse the devil who fights against Christ's rule in our hearts.

The wicked are not so aware of the devil's rule within them. In fact, they often think that they are the free ones, and that they are in the saddle, that they are the own gods of their own lives. But we know the battle for our hearts. The more we try to follow Jesus, and strive to live in obedience to our Him, the more we feel the devil's efforts. I remember a faithful Christian woman saying in frustration, "It seems like the older I get the more I sin." My guess is that she isn't sinning more, but as she is being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and growing in godliness, she is becoming more and more aware of her sins and of the devil that fights against her.

But, as we strive to follow our Lord, to live our lives in the hearing and keeping of the Word of our Lord, to live with Christian charity and love, to use our speech for the purposes which God had given it, for the blessing and building up of our neighbor and for the praise of our God, we may have the comfort that Christ has already gone this path, and has kept it perfectly. He endured the temptations and the road blocks put there by the devil, and Jesus perfectly obeyed the Father. By His cross, He has conquered the devil and has taken away all our failures. When the devil tries to convince our hearts that we belong to him, we can tell the devil, "You are a liar. Christ died for me, that I may be His. I am forgiven, and He has claimed me in baptism. He is my Lord. He won the victory over you, so shall I also stand victoriously over you." The devil cannot stand such scorn. He must depart from us, because Jesus sits on the throne of our hearts. By the Word of Christ's victory and our salvation, the kingdom of God has come upon us. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.