

This morning, we are in the 22nd week of a sermon series that I have entitled “Meeting Jesus.” I have been making my way this year through Luke’s account of the life of Jesus, looking at various interactions that people had with Jesus, in order to better understand what it means to know and follow Him. This morning, we will be in Luke 11:14-28, looking at an interaction that Jesus had with the crowd about spiritual evil.

Luke 11:14–26 - Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. ¹⁵ But some of them said, “By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.” ¹⁶ Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. ¹⁷ Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: “Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. ¹⁸ If Satan is divided against himself, how **can his kingdom stand?** I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul. ¹⁹ Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. ²⁰ But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²¹ “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. ²² But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and **divides up his plunder.** ²³ “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. ²⁴ “When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ ²⁵ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first.”

This passage begins with a simple healing story that takes up one verse: Jesus encounters a mute man, discerns that it is due to demonic oppression, drives out the demon, and the man can speak again. But Luke is more interested in what happens after the healing, as the crowd, while amazed at the healing, has mixed reactions to what the healing means about who Jesus is and by what power He heals. As we consider Jesus’ response, we learn three things about evil:

1) Satan and evil are real and powerful

When Jesus heals the mute man, some people in the crowd accuse Him of driving out the demon by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons. Beelzebul, another name for Satan, means “Lord of the flies.”

Luke 11:14–15 - Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. ¹⁵ But some of them said, “By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.”

Jesus does not deny the reality of demons and spiritual evil, or of Satan or Beelzebul, but instead argues with them that it makes no logical sense for Satan to cast out his own demons.

Luke 11:17–19 - Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: “Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. ¹⁸ If Satan is divided against himself, how **can his kingdom stand?** I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul. ¹⁹ Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out?”

And Jesus ends by telling a chilling story about the reality of demon oppression:

Luke 11:24–26 - “When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ ²⁵ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first.”

The Bible testifies to the reality of spiritual evil behind the forces of this world, and that these forces are very powerful, capable of destroying your life. The devil is a created being, an angel who rebelled against God and led other fallen angels in rebellion, and his goal is to destroy everything that God loves.

Isaiah 14:12–15 - How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! ¹³ You said in your heart, “I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. ¹⁴ I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” ¹⁵ But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit.

The devil lies, slanders, deceives, tempts in order to separate us from God. Listen to some other passages about the devil and spiritual evil:

John 10:10 – “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

John 8:44 – “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

1 Peter 5:8–9 - Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Ephesians 6:11-12 - Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Satan and demons are real and powerful, and are against God and all who He loves, including you and me. To the scientific west, believing in the devil may seem primitive. To which I would say a few things. First of all, most of the world has no problem believing in the spiritual world, so maybe we should not be so arrogant. Secondly, psychology and sociology and education don’t seem to be making the world a better place. This world is not getting less evil. Perhaps we are a bit too arrogant in our view of things, and perhaps the Bible is correct.

As CS Lewis said in his Preface to *The Screwtape Letters*, “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”

2) There is no neutral ground in the spiritual battle

After Jesus heals the mute man, some try to discredit Jesus by attributing his healing to Beelzebul. Others want more proof, asking him for a sign from heaven. And as Jesus confronts them in their unbelief and skepticism, he concludes by saying:

Luke 11:23 - “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”

Remember that he had said something similar in an earlier passage:

Luke 9:50 - “Do not stop him,” Jesus said, “for whoever is not against you is for you.”

Both of these passages are very binary in nature. There is no neutral ground in the spiritual battle, according to Jesus. You are either for Jesus, gathering people to the Father, or you are against him. And if you are against him, you are scattering people towards destruction.

Jesus is not a universalist, and he does not proclaim that there are many ways to be saved. He is very binary, very black and white. There is no fence-sitting with Jesus. You must choose one side or the other.

So what about you? Have you trusted in Jesus for salvation? Or are you still on the fence? Are you still looking elsewhere for salvation and God?

John 3:16–18 – “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

Acts 4:12 – “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

There is no neutral ground in the spiritual battle; you are either with Jesus or against Him. And if you trust in Him for salvation, rest assured that He wants every part of your life. If there are parts of your life that are not submitted to him, then they are against Him too. Consider what Jesus said:

Luke 16:13 - “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

My introduction to discipleship was a little booklet I picked up on the InterVarsity book table back in the fall of 1994: *My Heart, Christ’s Home*, written in 1951 by Robert Boyd Munger. This simple work used the picture of Jesus dwelling in our hearts that is found in Ephesians 3:16-17 and John 14:23 to imagine our hearts as a

home, with various rooms representing the different areas of our life, and to consider what it would look like to let Jesus dwell in those rooms.

For example: there was the **library, or the study**, those books and images on which I focused my mind, those inputs that were forming my beliefs and imagination. As Jesus takes up residence in our heart, He asks us to fill our study, our mind, with His Word, with books and images and music and teachings that will point us to Him, renew our minds, and help bring our thoughts into captivity to Him. There was the **living room**, the relationships of my life, where Jesus wanted to be first, to meet with me every morning. There was the **rec room**, where I would spend time on activities and amusements that could either glorify Him or be a meaningless pursuit. There was the **workroom**, where Jesus would help me develop the talents and skills which He had given to me so that He might use me for good in His kingdom and in the lives of others. There was the **bedroom**, the most intimate area of my life, of which He also wanted to be Lord. And there was the **hall closet**, where I kept things hidden that I didn't want anyone to know about, things from my old life that I had not yet parted with, which Jesus wanted to clean out. The booklet ends with a transfer of the title of the house, as the author asks Jesus to no longer be a guest in the house, but to become the owner, the Lord and master of the house.

It's a simple analogy, seeing our hearts and lives as the home in which Jesus dwells by His Holy Spirit. But it is also an apt picture of discipleship. The nineteenth and twentieth century Dutch theologian and prime minister Abraham Kuyper once said, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!" And this sovereignty is meant to extend to every square inch of our lives. What room of your house, what part of your life, do you need to give Jesus not only access to but authority over today?

3) Jesus is stronger than Satan and spiritual evil

Luke 11:20–22 – “But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. ²² But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and **divides up his plunder.**”

Jesus tells them that his healing is evidence of the kingdom of God coming upon you. It would have brought to mind **Exodus 8:19** - The magicians said to Pharaoh,

“This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the Lord had said.

It is a battle of spiritual kingdoms that He has won. And He goes on to tell them that even though Satan is strong, He is stronger, and can overpower him, rescuing people from sin and death.

Hebrews 2:14–15 - Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Even though the devil and spiritual evil are real and powerful, we do not need to live in fear. By Jesus’ death on the cross, he has destroyed the enemy.

Colossians 2:13–15 - When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

As Paul put it, Jesus told him:

Acts 26:17–18 – “I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸ to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

Jesus is stronger than Satan and spiritual evil. **So why is there still so much evil?** Because the reign of Jesus is already/not yet. He reigns but has not yet put a final end to evil; this will happen when He returns. He is like the president who has been elected but not yet been inaugurated. Or, as Oscar Cullman put it in his book *Christ and Time*, it is like the World War II distinction between "D-Day" and "V-Day." When the allies established the Normandy beachhead on "D-Day," the war in Europe was really won. Yet, "V-Day" remained in the future and the battle went on. Likewise, when Jesus came as God's Messiah (Deliverer), it was "D-Day," as the beachhead of God's kingdom was secured. It literally broke in upon us as the future became present. Nevertheless, we await its final consummation. When Jesus returns it will be "V-Day." The Christian life is then lived in this tension between

the kingdom come and coming. He reigns but that reign has not been fully implemented yet. But one day, we are promised this:

Revelation 11:15–17 - The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.”

Revelation 20:10 - And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

When Jesus heals, when He saves, when He transforms lives and relationships and communities, we see an inbreaking of the kingdom of God. And one day, when He returns, this invisible kingdom will be visible and perfected, as sin and death and evil are destroyed forever and we live with God and in His love and peace and joy forever. Until that day, we say Amen to the words of Revelation:

Revelation 22:20 - He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

In this passage, we see a great example of the reality and power of evil, but the greater power of Jesus to destroy evil and deliver us from all fear. Jesus shows himself to be stronger than all spiritual evil, even the prince of demons. Take Jesus’ warning to heart:

Luke 11:24–26 - “When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’²⁵ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order.²⁶ Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first.”

You are not safe from the powerful enemy unless you are submitted to the rule of Jesus, the stronger man. Submit every area of your life to Him and to His rule. Listen to Paul’s words:

Ephesians 4:26–27 - “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.

Satan is always seeking to destroy, to get a foothold. It is not enough to just be cleansed or repent; you must fill every aspect of your life with His Spirit, submit every aspect of your life to His rule. Do not give the devil a foothold!

Ephesians 5:15–20 - Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,

¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you do not know Jesus this morning, pray with me:

Jesus, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God. I believe that in you is found eternal life, life to the full. I believe that apart from faith in you, I will die in my sins, separated from God for all eternity. But I believe that you love me so much that you died on the cross in my place, taking the penalty for my sin, and that you rose from the grave, conquering death. I turn from my sinful, self-centered way of life and I believe in you as my Savior and Lord. Forgive my sins, and fill me with your Holy Spirit. Amen.

And if you do know Jesus, walk through the house of your heart, so to speak. Evict anything that is not of Him, and invite Him to be Lord of your whole life today. Amen.