

No Vacancy!
Matthew 12:43-45
Sunday, May 29, 2016

My mom always told me that if I played with fire, I would get burned. Many people like to play with fire. Do you play with fire? Today, when I say "by fire," I mean, "Are you playing with sin?" Do you think that you can avoid the hard consequences of doing so? Scripture clearly teaches that sin is not something that you and I can MANAGE, and our attempt to do so will result in disaster! In the Gospel of Matthew, there is a sobering story about the many-layered reality of sin and darkness. Jesus reminds us that there is an enemy behind all sin that is sinister and ruthless, and it wants nothing less than your absolute destruction! This story alerts us to the fact that while evil spirits are not the CAUSE of all sin, evil spirits are always somehow attached to the evil of our sin. Some of you here today may feel that you are not in danger because you are not addicted to any one particular sin. But Satan and his host are frighteningly crafty in the way that they work, and their AIM is always the same: Death. Like everyone else, I struggle against sin in my own life. I even have an "addictive personality." This means that I am easily addicted to stuff! Are you? How might this be setting the enemy up in our lives? Let's see!

Listen to the way that Jesus described the activity of an evil spirit who preys upon a man. **Matthew 12:43-45 ESV**

43 "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. 45 Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation."

POINT #1 - Evil can be CAST out . . .

*Jesus consistently demonstrated his power over evil spirits and over evil!

*I am so glad to know that Jesus can make us CLEAN no matter what we struggle with in our lives!

-CLEAN is the appropriate word. An **EVIL** spirit is a **FOUL/VILE** spirit. Nasty!
 -It feels so good to be free and clean of guilt/shame/grime of sin.

*But, I have known many addicts who were TEMPORARILY freed from addiction.

. . . Or, it may COME AND GO as IT pleases!

*Some spirits may feel free to DRIFT back and forth between people.

-The word used for “goes out from” can either mean to “be cast out,” or to “go on your own accord.”

*This TEMPORARY sense of RELIEF can be very CONFUSING and DANGEROUS! Sin loves our illusion of CONTROL! **[Bait bowing to a fish]**

POINT #2 - Evil is ALWAYS SEARCHING for a place to PLAY!

*“Passes through . . . seeking.” This means that it is an active, comprehensive search.

-He will not REST until he finds a place to SETTLE DOWN.

*Evil is ALWAYS looking for an avenue in!

*“Waterless places.” This is referring to a place without LIFE! [Illus.: Getting old!]

*Remember Ezekiel’s DRY BONES?

***Water in Scripture: OUR KEY SOURCES OF LIFE!**

*The Word of God – **Ephesians 5:25-26 NKJV**

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.

*The Spirit of God – **John 7:38-39 NIV**

38 Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." 39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

*“a place to REST.” The word REST actually means RECREATION!

-Your DESTRUCTION is the Devil’s RECREATION!

*Your misery is his play. You are a GAME for him.

POINT #3 - Evil ALWAYS tries to GO BACK where it was ALLOWED before! (44)

44 Then it says, 'I will return to **my house** from which I came.'

*“MY house” – The enemy sees your soul as his RIGHTFUL ground.

-How have you given ground (“rights”) to the enemy? [Hiding Places? Access?]

[I WILL SURVIVE – GLORIA GAYNOR]

1. At first I was afraid, I was petrified

2. Kept thinkin' I could never live without you by my side

3. But then I spent so many nights thinking how you did me wrong

4. And I grew strong

5. And I learned how to get along

And so you're back from outer space

6. I just walked in to find you here with that sad look upon your face

7. I should have changed that stupid lock

8. I should have made you leave your key

If I had known for just one second you'd be back to bother me

There are TWO reasons why the enemy has the right to return:

Matthew 12:44b NLT

44 And **when** it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order.

1. Our idea of CLEAN is only SKIN DEEP!

*"swept=brushed off. "Put in order" is the Greek word "Kosmeo."

Both concepts are simply COSMETIC!

-The idea is that you merely LOOK GOOD! You are only decorated.

-But something is LACKING! **Matthew 23:27-28 NLT**

27 "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs--beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. 28 Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.

2. "EMPTY" is never clean enough!

***The word "EMPTY" has two meanings:**

-Empty means "at LEISURE."

*The idea is that this home is not ALERT or WATCHFUL. It is IDLE.

-You must always be "on your guard" for the roaring lion!

-Your greatest vulnerability comes at your laziest moments!

-Empty also means "a Centurion's VACANT OFFICE."

*You must ensure that someone stronger than you is ON GUARD at all times!

Luke 11:20-22 NIV

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.

So, what must we do? Examine your HEART and examine your HUNGERS!

***First, you must make sure that you actually BELONG to Christ!**

Does he control the reins of your heart?

Have you accepted his PROTECTION and his RULE? **John 10:27-28 NLT**

27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me.

JESUS IS our STRONG TOWER, and REFUGE, our MIGHTY WARRIOR, our REARGUARD and the ONE WHO GOES BEFORE US. He is OUR GOOD SHEPHERD?

***Second, you must constantly monitor the HUNGERS of your soul!**

-How HUNGRY are you for God's Word and for spiritual nourishment?

*How consistent are you in keeping your soul satisfied in Christ?

-How OBEDIENT are you to Christ right now?

Religion defines life by what we DON'T DO. [Don't drink, smoke, etc.]

Christ defined life by what we DO! **Matthew 22:37-38 NLT**

37 Jesus replied, "'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

*Jesus defined our love for him as OBEDIENCE! **John 14:21 NLT**

21 Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them."

***Honestly examine the sin(s) that you are tempted by or are playing with.**

-Pray for DISCERNMENT concerning their SOURCE!

*Are they driven by some hurt, envy, anger, or LACK within you?

*Are they caused by a failure to STAY FULL of good fruit?

[My statement after a big meal: "I'm just not hungry right now!"]

*Learn the **PRINCIPLE OF DISPLACEMENT!** [Mom and music!]

-Be FILLED with the HOLY SPIRIT – TODAY!

When you accept him, obey him, and find your fulfillment in him, you maintain the sign that says:

NO VACANCY!