

INTRODUCTION

We find ourselves in troubling times. There's an old story about a man who was walking along at night when he discovered another man ready to jump off a bridge to commit suicide. The stranger tried to persuade the man not to jump. He said, "You give me five minutes to tell you why life is worth living and then I'll give you five minutes to tell me why life isn't worth living." According to the story, ten minutes later, both of them jumped off the bridge.

That's funny, but it's not far from the truth. With the latest anthrax scare, fear is spreading throughout our nation. The Bible says, "God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and a sound mind." (II Timothy 1:7). Since this fear isn't from God, it is from the sinister minister of fear, the devil himself. In this passage today, Jesus is going to unmask the face of evil and teach us some things about the way the devil and his demons operate.

One of the reasons it's good to study the Bible verse after verse is because it removes the temptation we often face to "skip over" difficult or confusing passages. When you first read through this section in Luke 11, you may end up scratching your head. Jesus often spoke in parables and used enigmatic language so true disciples would invest the energy to dig below the surface of His Words to excavate the precious treasure of truth there. Let's sharpen our God-given tools (our minds) and dig.

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. But some of them said, "By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons." Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

When a strong man fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils. He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. 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 man is worse than the first." As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

When you take the time to study this section carefully, you will find Jesus is issuing four spiritual principles important for us to understand. First, He was teaching that

I. THERE ARE ONLY TWO SPIRITUAL KINGDOMS (14-20)

Jesus often cast evil spirits, or demons out of afflicted people. We discovered earlier the term "demon possession" doesn't appear in the Bible. Instead the word is "demonized" and it means people may be influenced on different levels by these demonic spirits. In our text, Jesus recognized a demonic spirit was keeping the man speechless, so He liberated the man by casting out the demon.

By now, Jesus had many opponents who followed Him around just waiting for Him to say or do something worthy of being arrested. They couldn't deny this man who had been speechless was talking, so they attacked Jesus by saying He got His power from Beelzebub, which means "lord of the flies. It was used as another name for the devil, or Satan. Jesus was amused at their twisted logic, so He reasoned since He opposed Satan, that would mean Satan's kingdom would be divided. It's important to note Jesus claimed Satan has a kingdom.

But Jesus also spoke of another Kingdom. He reasoned if He was using the "finger of God" (a euphemism for God's power), then God's Kingdom had come. Let's focus on what Jesus was teaching about those two spiritual kingdoms. As you will see, this is extremely relevant for us today.

Since Satan has a spiritual kingdom, how can you recognize those who are engaged in that kingdom? Or, how can you recognize those who are involved in the kingdom of Jesus? Simple, you learn about the character and activity of the "king" of that kingdom and you look to see who is behaving that way. In one simple verse, John 10:10, Jesus provides the clear distinction between these two kingdoms.

1. Satan's desire: "the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy ..." (John 10:10)

Jesus used three words to describe Satan's personality and activity: Steal, kill, and destroy. Now, Satan is extremely shrewd and subtle. He doesn't want to appear to be evil. In fact, the Bible says he disguises himself as an angel of light. But Jesus exposed Satan for who he really is. In John 8:44, Jesus said, "He (Satan) 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." Compare that to the kingdom of Jesus:

2. Jesus' desire: "... I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

What a contrast! Jesus not only claimed to give life, He claimed to *be* the life; He didn't just *know* the way, He *is* the way; He didn't just *speak* the truth, He *is* truth. He said, "I am the way, the truth, the life, no one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

Now, we are all aware of religious people who are attacking Americans at this moment. Let's stop and evaluate to which of these two kingdoms do these "evil doers" belong? The terrorists who hijacked the airliners and flew them into the Pentagon and the World Trade Center claimed to be following their god—just who was their god? The recording from the cockpit voice recorder of one of the hijacked airliners has been recovered. After the terrorists gained control

of the cockpit, they told the passengers, “Stay calm we are returning to the airport.” That was a *lie*, because moments later they flew the jet into the WTC. That was an act of murder and they not only murdered the passengers but they destroyed the lives and families of thousands of others. I’m not shifting responsibility to the devil, but I have no problem declaring this brutal attack, as well as the current biological attacks, are Satanically inspired. How do I know? That’s what he does: he steals, kills, and destroys.

I’m not so concerned about being politically correct and risking the danger of offending someone that I won’t speak the truth to you. As your pastor, it’s my duty and desire to protect the flock. We must open our eyes to the truth that a large number of Muslims are committed to this jihad against America.

I say again, our spiritual war is not against Muslims, and we should be showing kindness to local Muslims and should be trying to lovingly draw them to Jesus. For our military, this is physical warfare, but for Christians, this is spiritual warfare. God tells us in Ephesians 6 we aren’t fighting against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers (meaning ranks of demons) and spiritual wickedness in high places (which is a word for governments).

I understand our government must attempt to maintain friendly relations with Arab nations, but frankly, I cringe every time a news commentator says Islam is a peaceful and peace-loving religion. I’d like to respectfully challenge this. Most of you have learned when I preach, this pulpit is a no-spin zone, and what I have to say is certainly not politically correct and I will be labeled as narrow-minded and intolerant. However, the facts behind the history of Islam do not support the idea it is a peaceful religion. You only have to look at its founder, Mohammed. In the biography “Mohammed” Essad Bey wrote: Mohammed said at the age of 52, by divine revelation, “God has given me the mission of the sword.” As a consequence of his “divine revelation” it is recorded he led 74 military campaigns, 24 of them personally. He actively attacked and robbed the camel caravans of Arabia stealing great wealth.

What did the thief come to do? Steal, kill and destroy. Soon after the September 11 attacks, many Americans thought Bin Laden represented only a tiny radical fringe of Islam. Since then we have seen thousands and hundreds of thousands of his supporters marching in the streets in Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt and almost every other Islamic nation. This attack on America should not have surprised us. I got this next quote right off the U.S. State Department website. It had been posted there for a couple of years before September 11.

On February 23, 1998, Osama Bin Ladin issued the following world-wide fatwa [only one sentence from a lengthy statement]: The ruling to kill all Americans and their allies — civilians and military — is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip.

Those are lies. There is absolutely no American control or involvement with those two mosques. But millions of illiterate Muslims have been made to believe Americans are intentionally desecrating Muslim holy sites. That’s a smart way to whip up a jihad—just lie. I agree with our President who said this is a war between good and evil and these men are “evil doers.”

America has been called "the great Satan" by these Muslim extremists. The enemies of Jesus said He was in league with Beelzebub. It's dangerous to attribute to Satan the things of God. The other side of the statement is just as true: When evildoers use "God's name" to murder, lie, and steal, they are on dangerous ground as well.

Was Mohammed truly the last and greatest prophet of God? Is Bin Laden a man of God? Mohammed taught Jesus was *not* the son of God, or God in the flesh—He was not resurrected. They taught he was simply a prophet like Abraham or Moses. According to our Bible, that makes them false prophets who speak for a false religion.

I John 4:1-4 gives some clear directions on how you can tell if "spiritual truth" is truly from God or not.

"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. You dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."

Now, I'm not saying Bin Laden is *the* antichrist, but he is one of many antichrists who are in the world today denying Jesus was God in the flesh. But we don't have to be afraid, in fact we can rejoice, because as John said, "greater is He who is in us (Jesus) than he who is in the world (Satan). That's exactly the second point Jesus was making in this passage.

II. SATAN IS STRONG BUT JESUS IS STRONGER (21-22)

Jesus gives a short parable about a strong man who is overcome by a stronger man. Obviously the strong man represents Satan and Jesus is the stronger man. Notice the reason Jesus goes into Satan's house (the world) was to take Satan's "possessions" and to "spoil" Satan's plan. Here's the million-dollar question:

What are Satan's "possessions?" People without Christ

Jesus visited planet earth to liberate us from the grip of the devil. Everyone without Christ is currently "possessed" in a sense by Satan. All of us who are now Christians were at one time in his house. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:1-5: "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature ... but because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."

If you aren't a Christian, you probably resent my assertion you are under the control of Satan. Again, the Bible says in II Corinthians 4:3-4, "If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are

perishing. The god of this age (Satan) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.”

Jesus came to rescue you from the devil’s bondage—even if you don’t realize you are in bondage. There is a species of ant in South America, whose name translates to “slave-making ants.” Hundreds of these ants will periodically swarm out of their nest and attack colonies of weaker ants. After destroying the living ants, they carry back the larvae of unhatched ants. When these young ants are hatched, they are made to be worker ants. These worker ants are born thinking they belong to the colony never realizing they were forced to be slaves from the time they are born. Even so, we enter the world as part of the wrong kingdom. We all need someone to rescue us. Jesus came to destroy Satan’s kingdom and to liberate us from sin.

III. THERE IS NO NEUTRAL GROUND IN YOUR RESPONSE TO JESUS (23)

In football, there is a neutral zone called the line of scrimmage. If a defensive lineman takes his stance in the neutral zone, or gets into the neutral zone before the ball is snapped, a penalty is called. Some people mistakenly think there is a neutral zone in relation to Jesus. He said you are either *for* Him or *against* Him. Our President has taken the same stance in regard to terrorism. He said nations are either *for* the terrorists or *against* the terrorists, with no middle ground. Consider two things:

1. The essence of your belief: *with* Jesus or *against* Jesus?

You don’t need to argue about the differences of religions, or even doctrinal differences between Christians. The key issue is your response to Jesus. You can’t escape it. Either you believe Jesus *is* who He claimed to be, the Son of God, God in the flesh, the only way to heaven, or you *don’t* believe it. There is no middle ground. You can’t just say Jesus was merely a great man, or even merely one of many great prophets.

I often refer to C.S. Lewis, one the greatest minds of the 20th century. He was an agnostic professor of Literature at Cambridge University. In setting out to disprove the Christian faith, he became a committed Christian and a prime example of the fact you can be an intellectual giant and still believe in Jesus. Lewis wrote:

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing people often say about Him; ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ This is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level of the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell; You can shut him up as a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. (*Mere Christianity*, p. 55)

2. The effect of your lifestyle: gathering with Jesus or scattering from Jesus?

Jesus also said your belief can often be determined by your activity. If you are truly *for* Jesus, you will be gathering people with Him. If you are against Him, you will be scattering people

away from Him. Every word you speak and every action you perform will either draw people to Jesus or contribute to pushing them away. The greatest danger for Christianity in the 21st century is from Christians who confess Jesus with their lips but go out and deny him by their lifestyle. That's what an unbelieving world finds simply unbelievable.

Ask yourself, "Where do I stand in relation with Jesus? Am I trusting Him with my life? Do I believe He is the Son of God, and the only way I can be saved? Am I for Him?" If not, you are against Him. You may be thinking, "Well, I just won't decide either way." Not to decide is to decide not to trust Him. There is no middle ground. During the Civil War a man in Kentucky refused to take sides. So he wore a Union shirt and Confederate pants. As a result, he got shot at from both sides! There is no neutrality with Jesus.

IV. CLEANING UP YOUR LIFE WITHOUT FILLING UP YOUR HEART CAN BE DANGEROUS (24-28)

Jesus gave a strange example of a demon that left a certain man and wandered for a while. When the demon returned, he found the "house" (person) swept clean—but empty. So he summoned seven of his demonic buddies and they entered the person's mind and threw a hellish party. Jesus observes in verse 26, "the final condition of that man is worse than the first." It's not enough to simply "clean up" your life if you don't replace the evil with the goodness of God. Thus the title of this message: The Danger of an Empty Life. Let's look at both sides of this point.

1. Man's attempt is reformation

When a person has some "junk"—some sin—in their life, they often have a desire to want to change, to reform their behavior. Some don't want to change but wanting to change is a necessary first step. We could use any addiction as an example, but let's use alcohol addiction because it's fairly common. If a person is an alcoholic they may think the answer is to simply quit drinking. They can go to treatment centers, and go through 12-step programs galore—and those are good programs if you realize they aren't final answers. We've all known people who have seemingly quit drinking. They are like the person in Jesus' example. They get their lives "cleaned up." But sadly, unless they fill the emptiness with God, many of them find themselves back in the same vicious cycle of addiction. It's as if seven more demons have come to torment them to drink.

Most 12-step programs speak of a "higher power" or "God as you understand Him." That's a great place to start. But you need to understand Jesus Christ is the "higher power" who wants to "fill" the emptiness inside your life. Billy Sunday used to say, "An alcoholic can quit drinking, but unless he invites Jesus to come into his life and forgive his sins, it just means that he'll go to hell sober."

You see the Christian life is *not* about what you *don't* do. I know that's a double negative, but read it again. Some people think a Christian is known for what they don't do. "I don't drink and I don't chew and I don't go with boys who do."

When I was growing up in South Alabama, juvenile delinquents were sent to something call "Reform School." I knew some guys who spend some time there and it didn't work. The answer is not reformation. That's man's attempt—God has a better idea:

2. God's requirement is rebirth

Getting your life "clean and swept out" is the first part of the larger process of allowing Him to fill your life with His goodness. If the demon in Jesus' example had returned to the man and found his life full of the God's goodness, I believe the demon would have turned and fled. When demonic temptation comes knocking on the front door of your life, send Jesus to answer the door and the devil always says, "Oops, wrong address!"

It's not enough to just "turn over a new leaf" or to "clean up your act" you must make sure Jesus Christ inhabits your heart. Once a very religious but lost man came to Jesus to discuss God's requirements. In John 3 Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'you *must* be born again.'" (John 3:5-7) "I pray that he would strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." (Ephesians 3:16)

If I asked how you know you are saved, don't say, "Because I don't drink or smoke or dance or do drugs." No, you need to say, because I've been born again and I *know* Christ is dwelling in my heart. How can you know that you know that you know that you have been born again? I think Jesus gives us the key to the question in verse 28.

3. When you obey Him, Jesus is ruling in your heart

A woman cries out that the mother of Jesus is truly blessed. He says, "blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." Jesus had a great mother. She was blessed among women, but Jesus would not allow this woman in the crowd to make the mistake of thinking that standing before God has anything to do with your biological family background. You won't get into heaven because your daddy was a preacher or because your mother was a saint. God has no grandchildren, only children. If you were raised in a Christian home, you should be grateful, but that doesn't make you a Christian. Being born in a Christian home doesn't make you a Christian any more than being born in a bakery makes you a biscuit!

Jesus doesn't want to just reside in your heart, He wants to rule in your heart as Lord. You can't just invite Jesus into your life and say, "I don't want to burn in hell, so come in, but sit over there in the corner and keep quiet, I want to live my own life. I'll let you lead me on Sundays, but I'm calling the shots the other six days." No, Jesus wants to be your Boss, your Lord, reigning and ruling in your life 24 hour a day, 7 days a week.

His Word says to "repent and be baptized"—have you obeyed Him? His Word says "be anxious for nothing" are you obeying Him, or are you worrying. Obedience is the key to blessing.

CONCLUSION

There are two and *only* two spiritual kingdoms. Which one are you a part of? Over the past few weeks, we have seen the wicked face of evil, but we don't have to fear, because Jesus is stronger than the evil one! He has already defeated Satan at the cross!

It could be you haven't yet trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior. You don't even realize you are in bondage to the devil. Is your life full of the wrong things right now? Don't think the answer is just to "clean up" and get rid of the junk. You must invite Jesus into your heart to fill the emptiness there. It's never too late to do that.

Answer this simple question: Are you *for* Jesus, or *against* Jesus? Is your lifestyle drawing people to Jesus, or pushing them away?

Jesus always saw things in black and white. There is no middle ground. Either you are for Him or against Him. Most of you know the story of the H.M.S. Titanic. It was a ship so large and safe, one of the builders boasted, "God himself couldn't sink her." She was thought to be unsinkable, but that's all she ever did—sink. Only 32 percent of the passengers survived. Over 1,500 perished. Relatives and friends gathered at the offices of the White Star Line in Liverpool England and each day, two lists of names would be updated. One list said, "Saved" and the other list said, "Lost." Right now, and for eternity, those will be the only two spiritual positions. Which list is your name on? Are you saved or lost?

OUTLINE

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1. Satan's desire: "the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy ..." *John 10:10*
2. Jesus' desire: "... I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." *John 10:10*

II. SATAN IS STRONG BUT JESUS IS STRONGER (21-22)

What are Satan's "possessions?" People without Christ

III. THERE IS NO NEUTRAL GROUND IN YOUR RESPONSE TO JESUS (23)

1. The essence of your belief: with Jesus or against Jesus?
2. The effect of your lifestyle: gathering with Jesus or scattering away from Jesus?

IV. CLEANING UP YOUR LIFESTYLE WITHOUT FILLING UP YOUR HEART CAN BE DANGEROUS (24-28)

1. Man's attempt is reformation
2. God's requirement is rebirth
3. When you obey Him, Jesus is ruling in your heart



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes