

The Stronger Conquers The Strong

Luke 11:14-28 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!"

The year was 1781 during the month of October. George Washington and his troops were on the verge of victory. British General Charles Cornwallis had just retreated to Yorktown Virginia in order to maintain naval communications. In light of this, George Washington and the American troops took to Yorktown by land and by sea. For a period of about three weeks, the Americans had the British pinned. Surrounded, outgunned, and low on food, Cornwallis surrendered his army on October 19th. This day, known as the siege of Yorktown, marked the end of the Revolutionary war. In this battle, the strong British encampment was conquered by the stronger American siege, resulting in the success of the independence from the British throne.

We celebrate such independence once a year during the summer, but this isn't the only form of independence which we celebrate. We formally celebrate a greater independence every Sunday, and informally all the time. This independence is the one granted to us when Satan, the strong, was conquered by Jesus, the stronger. Satan, who once had possession of our hearts, was cast out by Jesus Christ by laying siege to our hearts by the power of Calvary's cross. He also uses His word to tell us this wonderful fact, so that we may obtain salvation. So then our theme, The stronger conquers the strong, by His power and His word.

Our text for today opens with Jesus casting out what Luke has described as a mute demon. This is not to say that the demon itself could not speak, but that it affected its captor by taking away his ability to speak. From this and from other places in scripture, we see that demons and the devil himself have immense power. They have the power to physically manipulate one's body and its capabilities. Usually they do so in a violent way, but here, the demon simply made the man mute. Such power they have, but today demons don't usually use their power in this way, but rather they use their power more subtly. In subtle ways, the devil and his angels work in mankind by intriguing their sinful nature to partake of sinful activity. In view of all of this, demons absolutely love to dwell in the hearts of men making them sin and bringing them into eternal doom with them. This is their mission, for they are restless creatures who know that they themselves are doomed because of God's punishment. So now they seek to take a human or two with them in order. For they hate the Lord and His creation. I bring these facts before you today to warn you for they especially want you.

Notice what Jesus says in verses 24-26: "I (that is the demon) will return to my house from which I came.'

25 And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order.

26 Then it goes and brings 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." Jesus is depicting those who had God's Word and lost it. People of such are worse off than when they started. We see the example of this in the accusation against Jesus. Jesus' opposition were those classic examples of Israel who had the Old testament scriptures and lost them. Their state is so much worse than the original that they make silly accusations such as, "He does this by Beelzebul." How ironic. The word Beelzebul comes from the Canaanite god Baal, who was referred to as the lord of the dwelling. Jesus refers to him as Satan, the one who wants to dwell in you. Why would Satan cast out the very demons that wish to dwell in evil hearts by his own bidding? Jesus literally cast out the Lord's enemy, and this is what the people have to say? How ridiculous. How horrid. Thus is the way of a heart that has been demon infested sevenfold.

Let us pray that we don't lose the word and become like those who have lost it. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit daily reveal the truth of God's Word, for it shows us why we don't have seven demons or even one demon in our hearts. For the stronger has conquered the strong and By the Lord's power does Jesus cast demons out. He is the reason why Satan no longer dwells in our hearts. Satan used to dwell there, and he guarded it as a fully armed soldier guards a keep. Like a knight guarding a castle, Satan, strong and fully armored, had his goods protected. Nothing could drive him from our hearts. Nothing is strong enough. Sadly, some disagree.

One may say to themselves, "if I try hard enough to do good, than I'll be a good person worthy of salvation." That's like throwing a pebble at the fully armored knight. It won't work. Another may say "Once I feel that I'm saved, then I know I'm fine." That's like throwing a pebble from a different angle. Even another may say "I'm the son or daughter of wonderful christian parents. That must mean I'm saved." That's like a small child saying to the knight, "hey, this house is my dad's. Give it back." To which the knight replies, "Make me." Nothing we humans could do was

going to make the powerful and armed devil move from our hearts, until one stronger than him can conquer Him.

Jesus points out to the naysayers that forcing the demon to leave was certainly not the work of Beelzebub, but it was by the finger of God. Jesus Himself is the stronger who has come to conquer the strong. He demonstrated this glorious capability by casting out the mute demon. When Jesus cast out demons from the people, He showed His power over Satan and his evil angels. He did much more than that when he destroyed Satan once and for all on why he died on the cross." When Satan occupied our hearts, Jesus laid siege to our hearts during His time on earth. In this long gruesome siege, He obeyed every law perfectly for us from His birth to His death. He did this all the way up to Holy week where He knew the end was near. Satan was desperate, fighting tooth and nail. He tempted Jesus with the Jews, "If you come down from the cross, we'll believe you. He gave Him an out with Pilate, "I find no guilt in this man." He used Jesus' own disciple, "far be it from you lord that this should happen to you." Jesus took none of these. In His final hours on the cross of Calvary, Jesus destroyed the Devil. The stronger conquered the strong. He finished His work, and now the armor of Satan has been taken away. Martin Luther put it well, one little word can fell him. Jesus cast Satan out of our hearts. He has divided the spoils. We are now His. He is the one who now dwells in our hearts.

The devil has lost, and this is why he is trying to take as many people with him to hell as possible. They seek to corrupt human hearts, and they especially love to corrupt the hearts of those who had the Word and abandoned it. The Word is very important. It tells us of how Jesus conquered Satan by His powerful sacrifice on the cross. Jesus conquered Satan and kicked him out of our hearts by His power, but this is shown to us by His word. Jesus did say blessed are they who hear the word of God. For the Word of God is what creates the faith that trusts in Jesus' powerful sacrifice, but Jesus also said blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it, for one does not simply read God's Word once and is set for an eternal lifetime. The Word nourishes the soul daily. It is meant to daily remind us that Jesus Christ, the conqueror, dwells in our hearts. The Word showed us why we don't have one demon dwelling in our hearts, and, but it also keeps us from having seven demons in our hearts.

A heart with seven demons as opposed to one depicts the awful state of losing the Word of God. The apostle Peter puts it well in His second epistle, "For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. 20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21 For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."

This is what happens when one has the word and loses it. Their spiritual state has become far worse than the first. This happened back then and it happens now. Let me illustrate. Maybe some of you have a friend or acquaintance who was a Christian, maybe even a staunch one at

that, but after awhile, they started to move further and further away from the word. They stopped coming to church as frequently and maybe even dodge the mention of it with smooth talk, frustrated debate, awkward silence, or whatever social device that can help in dodging the question. This abandonment grows and grows, and finally, if you ever have seen someone reach this final step, they renounce God and His word. They start asking for signs. "If God was loving, then why would bad things happen?" They may say something along these lines and will make conclusions such as, "He must not exist then," or "He must not be all powerful then." If you have encountered this, then you know how bad it is.

A heart with seven demons is very awful, but it happens because the word is lost. So remember that Jesus conquered Satan by His Power and His Word. His Word tells us of what He has done, and it creates and sustains faith in hearts. If you see a friend struggling with their faith, show them the word, for it truly blesses those who hear it by bolstering their faith. It keeps the demons from ever coming in.

Take this fact with you so that you may help not just those around you, but so that you yourself can be helped. Jesus conquered Satan and kicked him out of the House of your Heart, but How protected is your house? Do we look to God's word all the time, or do we doubt His goodness or ask for signs? The more the guard is down, the more the demons look to regain entry. This is alarming and it should be, but there is no need to fear, for we have before us God's Word which tells us of Jesus Christ, who cast out demons by the finger of God. The Word tells of the Jesus, the stronger man who conquered the strong man in our hearts by His death on Calvary. We have the Scriptures which tell us the truths of Jesus, who is the one who keeps the demons back. His goodness is real. His Word is sufficient. It tells us of His sacrifice. We are truly blessed.

The traditional Liturgy sums it up well. In it, the pastor says after the Gospel reading, "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." How true this is indeed. Afterwards, you may also sing, "these words are written that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This is exactly what the Word shows us. Jesus is the Son of God who went to Calvary in order that He may conquer the Devil. The stronger has conquered the strong by His power as shown by His Word. With this we may say, Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.