

Slogan for 2010: Whatever It Takes!

Stewardship Theme: Let's Give God What He Wants!

Sermon: Spirit-Filled: You Have a Choice

Text: Luke 11:14-28

Gary L. Wackler

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Introduction: As we move ever deeper into Luke's gospel we sense the developing rift between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders. It is a question of "by whose authority" anything is said or done. Earlier in Luke there had been a picture of an *us-vs.-them mentality* by the disciples of Jesus. After the disciples had returned from an evangelistic campaign, we heard this:

Luke 9:49-50 (NIV) ⁴⁹"Master," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us." ⁵⁰"Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you."

We should not be too critical when the Jewish authorities claim Jesus is not one of their group, i.e., *followers of God*. They were doing exactly what the disciples did.

In his ministry, Jesus is certainly trying to tell us there is a physical and spiritual realm to his universe. There is a cosmic battle being waged for the hearts and souls of humankind. The Apostle Paul understood theologically what Jesus was saying:

Ephesians 6:12-13 (NIV) ¹²For 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. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Paul is not saying there are never physical struggles; because as long as we are in the flesh, there will be problems. He is saying our focus ought to always be on God. Our stewardship theme is: *Let's Give God What He Wants*. Ultimately God wants more from us than just our money.

I. God Wants Us to Recognize Him (vv. 14-23)

A. By His miracles (vv. 14, 20)

Luke 11:14, 20 (NIV) ¹⁴Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. ²⁰But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

Not all disease is physical; some is spiritual. Jesus dealt with the root cause: a demon. Once the demon is removed, the man can get his life back. A person will take on the characteristics of the person who has the most influence in his life. This man had been mute (dumb), could not speak because the demon could not speak.

Jesus took opportunities to heal people to develop and strengthen faith, to open up dialog about who he was. In this particular case, Jesus wants everyone to recognize both his power and his mission - and they marvelled. The kingdom of God has come. Prayers had been answered. Jesus had said to his disciples: [Luke 11:2 \(NIV\)](#) ²...“When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.

God Wants Us to Recognize Him

B. By our reason ([vv. 15-19](#))

[Luke 11:15-19 \(NIV\)](#) ¹⁵But some of them said, “By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.” ¹⁶Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. ¹⁷Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: “Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. ¹⁸If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. ¹⁹Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges.

Jesus basically is saying : “use your heads; you’re smart people.” He uses three arguments with his audience:

1. Why would I work against my own master, if my authority and power came from Beelzebub? Beelzebub is just another name for Satan, the chief or prince of the demons. I certainly don’t work for *him*.
2. Your followers, disciples (lit. sons) cast out demons yet I am sure you are not claiming *they* have Satan’s help.
3. His last point is that the kingdom of God has come in his ministry, and they need to get on board rather than find themselves fighting against God like Pharaoh of old whose heart became so hard he could not see God’s hand in his time.

[Exodus 8:19 \(NIV\)](#) ¹⁹The 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.

I like this phrase “the finger of God.” It indicates to me that God did not even need his entire hand, just a finger to produce miracles.

Even today, Jesus asks us to think! What Jesus has said makes all the sense in the world. If people will only look at the evidence, they might see it, too. I think it is important to note that Jesus' critics never deny his miracles, they question his authority, and here - how he did it. Jesus' obvious authority and power over Satan and his cohorts demonstrate Jesus is both Savior and Lord.

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C. By His teaching (vv. 21-22)

Luke 11:21-22 (NIV) ²¹“When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. ²²But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.

Here is yet another parable. Jesus' favorite way to teach was with parables. It helped include those who were looking for the kingdom and exclude those who thought they knew better than God.

Jesus is not discounting Satan's power. Jesus *is saying*, though, that he is stronger. Not only is Jesus stronger, he has ultimately defeated Satan in the cross.

Colossians 2:15 (NIV) ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Yes, there are still skirmishes, but the major battle has been won, and there will be no recovery for Satan.

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D. By our relationship (v. 23).

Luke 11:23 (NIV) ²³“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.

There is no neutral ground in our relationship with God. We are either for Jesus, or we find ourselves fighting against him and his plan for our lives. The only sensible thing to do is to surrender and change to God's side.

Today, if your life is not about bringing others into the kingdom, it is like you are scattering the flock which puts them in mortal danger. Sheep cannot survive without a Shepherd. We all need to be gathering people into the kingdom for God.

“The Holy Spirit and spirits that hurt, maim and alienate do not walk together; the one who is not with me is against me.” - Craddock, *Luke*, p. 156

II. God Wants Us to Understand the Adversary (vv. 24-26)

A. Reformation is not regeneration (v. 24)

Luke 11:24 (NIV) ²⁴“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.’

I have seen a number of people over the years who come to the church for help, but never really establish a relationship with Jesus. There is no future in darkness. Bad spiritual choices will always result in terrible consequences. “Light for our darkness must come from outside ourselves if it is to come at all.” - Oswalt, p. 239

Self-help and support groups do a wonderful service for many people for a variety of issues. We have an AA group that meets here on Wednesday evenings, and there will be people helped by these meetings. Yet, if the so-called Higher Power is never really defined as Jesus for the person, all will be lost. If demon alcohol is not replaced by the Holy Spirit, then we have not ultimately helped anyone.

You can remove everything bad from your life maybe through sheer discipline of will, but ...

B. A vacant house is vulnerable to attack (vv. 25-26)

Luke 11:25-26 (NIV) ²⁵When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. ²⁶Then 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.”

The word (κοσμεω) translated “to put in order” is tied to our word cosmos and also cosmetics. According to Wikipedia, “Cosmetics include skin-care creams, lotions, powders, perfumes, lip sticks, fingernail and toenail polishes, eye and facial makeup, permanent waves, hair colors, hair sprays and gels, deodorants and many other types of products”. With available information in the market it has been suggested that worldwide annual expenditures on cosmetics is around U.S \$18 billion.

We do a lot to look good on the outside, but it really is the inside that is more important. Jesus taught this. **Matthew 23:25-28 (NIV)** ²⁵“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. ²⁷“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. ²⁸In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

“Even after our best efforts to pump all the air out of a cylinder, it will still have millions of molecules left. If we could expel all the air from one cubic foot of space, it would have a pressure upon it of 6.5 tons. Nature hates a vacuum. This is the tragedy of an empty life. We cannot expel the bad without bringing in the good.”

- Robert L. Cargill, *All the Parables of Jesus*, pp. 100-101

Empty houses are extremely difficult to insure because of the inherent danger of owning such a house. “Even small boys, intending no wrong to anyone, can hardly resist a rock through the window of a house without occupants.” - Craddock, Luke, p. 157

Who occupies your life? Who lives in you? Jesus is the only sensible answer. You can follow all the rules, but if you don’t follow Jesus, you are as good as dead even though you are breathing.

Romans 8:9-11 (NIV) ⁹You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

III. God Wants Us to Focus on the Spiritual (vv. 27-28)

A. Some value only the physical (v. 27)

Luke 11:27 (NIV) ²⁷As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, “Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.”

Jesus here is in no way denigrating Mary, his mother. She was indeed blessed by God. Mary was used by God to help bring the Messiah into the world. And God values the importance of family. He asks us to honor our parents. They gave us biological life. They feed, clothe and protect us.

The Greek words are smoothed out in the NIV, maybe more proper for public readings. It literally refers to the mother’s ability to support the fetus (womb) and then to provide nourishment through the mother’s breasts for the newborn baby.

As important as a good start to life is, it does not guarantee the person will turn out well. There is so much more to the kind of life God wants for us than the physical.

I Timothy 4:8 (NIV) ⁸For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

As Christians we are not supposed to remove ourselves from the physical world, but we do realize there is much more to this world than what meets the eye.

There is family, and then there is family. God provides for our whole person.

Some value only the physical while...

B. Others see God's blessing (v. 28)

Luke 11:28 (NIV) ²⁸He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Jesus provides a bit of a correction to those who only look at the physical world. They must not forget who created everything they see. There are people everywhere looking in all kinds of places for an answer to solve their alienation and aloneness. There is only one solution - Jesus! He is the one who can cleanse and heal you, and then provide you with his presence. There is no better house guest!

It is in hearing and then doing what our Father in heaven has asked that we are blessed. God supplies real health, real wholeness, and real peace. "Redemption comes through him. All that remains is for people to choose for him." Bock, *Luke*, p. 319

Conclusion: When you think about Jesus, whom do you see? Some, in their own time, saw him as a conspirator with Satan. Others who saw Jesus marvelled at his goodness and ability to heal and work signs. I believe Jesus is the Savior of the world and God's only Son who has ushered in the Father's kingdom. I hope you have placed your faith in him, too.

Regarding our current stewardship emphasis: if God lives in your heart (house), you will give as God directs. If God is not the primary resident, but self, there will be little thought for God's glory - only personal recognition.

If you believe what I do, it will be so much easier to do *Whatever It Takes* and say with me: *Let's Give God What He Wants.*