

The previous passage was on Jesus' guidance on prayer and His invitation to continue asking, seeking, and knocking, and promising that we will be answered. He encouraged us to ask for the best gift that our heavenly Father wants to give us, the Holy Spirit. Luke follows that with an account of those who were antagonistic toward Jesus. They declared that His power was from Satan.

¹⁴ *Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled.* Luke 11:14 "He was casting out a demon that was mute." Picture the scene. This poor man had felt for some time that his tongue was bound by an unseen power making him unable to communicate with others. Imagine the agony of never being able to communicate your heart, your needs, and simple conversation for years! My early years in Japan felt very much like that. I wanted to communicate but the language barrier kept deep communication from taking place. It was lonely and frustrating. This man had the added discomfort of sensing his tongue was bound. Most likely he did not know how to write. Even if he could, many people at the time could not read. All he felt was that of being trapped inside, unable to share his feelings or thoughts.

Then one day Jesus approached him, and he could feel within himself a war taking place. We don't know what Jesus said or did, but if it was like other confrontations, Jesus ordered the demon to leave (Mark 9:25¹). The demon had to let go, and suddenly this man's tongue was free to speak again. How he must have praised God and thanked Jesus for freeing him from this demon that took perverse pleasure in the man's discomfort and isolation!

Some people claim this wasn't a demon or even a physical condition but was a psychosomatic problem. It's an attempt to diminish the miracle. But either way it is a profound miracle. What psychological disorder is healed with a few minutes with a psychiatrist? What doctor heals vocal chords with a word?

This man in our passage couldn't even whisper because of demonic intervention. When Jesus cast it out, he was immediately able to speak. The crowd marveled at the instant transformation and Jesus' authority. ¹⁵ *But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,"* Luke 11:15 Instead of marveling at the deliverance and the restored ability to speak, and instead of praising God along with the man's new-found voice, these detractors tried to credit the miracle to Satan working in Jesus. Beelzebul was a derogatory expression for Satan, referring to him as the lord of dung. Why would they think such a thing of Jesus? There was this mute man healed and most likely praising God with his restored voice, and the crowd was marveling at the power of God. Why attribute it to Satan?

Obviously, these detractors did not like other things Jesus had said. The account of this in Mark tells us these critics were the teachers of the Law. We know Jesus had dared to contradict some of their teaching. (See Matthew 23.) People often attack the messenger if they don't like the message. It's nothing new. Since they disliked His message, they had to discredit His miracles by attributing them to an evil source. If Jesus was saying

things contrary to Scripture, that would have been a reasonable assertion, but since He was only speaking the truth of Scripture and correcting their misinterpretations, the allegation was absurd. It only exemplified their hatred and unreasonableness. Jesus is about to point out their hypocrisy to help those listening to discern the truth.

In the parallel passage in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus warned them against blaspheming the Holy Spirit.²⁸ *“Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter,²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”*—³⁰ *for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”* Mark 3:28-30 Jesus was saying they could criticize Him, and they would be forgiven. But if they were calling the Holy Spirit the lord of dung, they could not be forgiven. To call the power of God the power of darkness means the heart is dark. To reject the working of the Spirit in our hearts means we will never know Jesus, for it is only by the grace of God through the Spirit convicting us of sin that we repent and seek the forgiveness that Jesus provides through the cross (Ephesians 1:7ⁱⁱ).

It is something too common in our society. Those who stand for the Word of God and righteousness can be criticized and there is forgiveness for that. You might not like a person’s manner, or dress, or the way he or she speaks, but if someone calls the Holy Spirit working through us evil, if they see the good work He does and deride Him, there is no forgiveness. That is because they reject the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts which leads to repentance and salvation.

Jesus was calling for reverence of the Holy Spirit just as He called for reverence for the Father’s name in the Lord’s Prayer at the beginning of this chapter (Luke 11:2ⁱⁱⁱ). The Holy Spirit moves in the heart of the believer and calls us to action (Ephesians 2:10^{iv}). Then, if we cooperate, He works through us to touch lives (Philippians 2:13^v). Woe to the person who calls the source of those actions evil. It is a serious matter, for it reflects the heart’s condition of resisting the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶ *while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.* Luke 11:16 Moses gave the Children of Israel two signs when he came out of the desert to lead them to freedom, the leprous hand and the rod that became a snake (Exodus 4:2-8^{vi}). The new deliverer was to be like Moses. That was a prophecy given through Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15^{vii}). It’s no wonder then that they asked for a sign. The problem was that they had been given dozens of signs and would not receive them, just as they had rejected Moses when things didn’t go like they hoped. Jesus turned water into wine John 2:11^{viii}, fed 5000 men and their families from a little boy’s lunch (John 6:10-12^{ix}), healed a man that was born blind (John 9:32,33^x), as well as paralytics and lepers (John 6:2^{xi}). He even raised the dead (Luke 7:12-15^{xii}). What kind of sign did they want, a magic show? Jesus’ signs were so superior to those of Moses that they missed them. Jesus’ signs were the many fulfilled prophecies given about the Messiah’s ministry (Isaiah 42:6,7^{xiii}; 35:5,6^{xiv}).

Today, too, people want proof. We ask God for signs instead of just accepting what He has already done. Some people say that if we can prove Jesus is God they will believe. So, we show them the miracles written in the Gospels and the prophecies they fulfilled. Sometimes that is helpful, but often they make excuses. They say the disciples made it up long after Jesus died. We can argue about how soon the Gospels circulated but

let us suppose they were as late as the skeptics say. The suggestion that they made all those stories up is to say that Jesus, whom they claim to admire as a good man ahead of his time, was so lacking in discernment and so unclear in conveying his message that He chose men who would do the opposite of what He told them. Since Jesus said Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44^{xv}), they would have had been rebelling against Jesus' message to lie about His words and deeds.

We recently had the class on Bible Numerics discovered by Ivan Panin. I've read some very poor excuses for not believing the wonder of what he discovered. He found the fingerprint of God in the numerics underlying the entire Bible. The problem isn't the lack of evidence. The problem is man's desire to remain in charge of his own life! It is easy to make lame excuses that have no merit and go one's merry way and pretending the evidence did not add up (Matthew 16:25^{xvi}).

¹⁷ But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. Luke 11:17 The insults and lack of willingness to believe would have had most people just walking away. But Jesus knows they stand at the edge of eternity and don't realize the consequences of these momentary decisions. Truth is staring them in the face with evidence that is undeniable. Jesus knew there were people in the crowd who were trying to discern if He was really the Messiah. Jesus' simple logical answer helped every honest person discern the truth.

When nations or homes or churches are divided, they are destroyed. That often happens because of misunderstandings and the refusal to forgive. The prayer at the beginning of the chapter addressed that (Luke 11:4a^{xvii}). What does this say about our nation? We are so divided right down the middle. There are those with Christian values or at least a respect for the Christian values of our past, and there are those who say those values were evil and need to be discarded. Without a revival we can't go on this way for long. We won't need some rogue nation to strike. We'll destroy ourselves from within.

The foundation of the nation is the home. Homes are torn apart because of selfishness, a refusal to put their spouse first, to sacrifice for the sake of family. While the media cheapens the value of relationships it also glorifies self-seeking and nearly every ungodly idea imaginable. Our education system has rejected God as well. No wonder divorce is at such a high rate. If we believe we are an accident of time and random forces our lives have no meaning, it is no wonder children are hurting and confused. Without God, there is no reason for morals. That is one reason we support Christian education.

Husbands and wives must come together on what they can agree on and determine to focus on that, or division and destruction is inevitable. And don't think things will get better if we flee from the problems and start again. The problem is where ever you go, there *you* are (Jeremiah 17:9^{xviii}). Sure, where there is abuse and unfaithfulness divorce is allowed, but never forget that the enemy of our soul is a liar. He doesn't deliver on his promises. The prince or princess we think we deserve lives only in our imagination.

¹⁸ And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. Luke 11:18 Because division comes before destruction, if Satan is casting out his own demons, his demise is about to happen. Then the detractors should have been happy. Somehow, I don't believe they even believed

what they were saying (John 3:2^{xi}). These detractors just wanted to turn people away from listening to Jesus. If they knew they were lying, what judgment awaits them!

¹⁹ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. Luke 11:19 Jesus was asking those detractors if they were going to say the same about what their children were doing. Jesus used a strongly emphatic form when He said, 'your sons'. It may have been sons of teachers of the Law or their disciples. He was pointing out their duplicity. Jews had ritual exorcisms that used certain materials and prescribed commands. Jesus on the other hand just ordered the demon to leave. The demons even acknowledged that He is the Son of God with the authority to command them (Mark 5:7^{xx}).

²⁰ But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Luke 11:20 Jesus used a phrase from the Old Testament. When the rod of Moses caused the dust to turn to gnats, the Egyptian magicians said it was "the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19^{xxi}). Jesus was saying that casting out demons was a greater sign than the signs Moses gave to Israel. The plague of gnats was a sign even the Gentile Egyptians recognized. These teachers had harder hearts than the Egyptian priests!

Jesus then made a declaration. Since He cast out demons by God's power, the kingdom of God is present. Would they accept it or reject it? Jesus wasn't just a prophet; He was ushering in God's kingdom! The King was present, and they didn't recognize Him. He was saying, "Wake up! Stop making excuses." They stood before a holy God who is just. The opportunity to believe and be saved was obviously present. Don't make excuses to live as you desire and end up eternally damned (1 Timothy 5:6^{xxii})!

There are many people today who have seen signs just as amazing and clear but still make excuses. People patiently present the evidence to them, but justifying unbelief almost seems like a game to them. Others choose a completely illogical belief system that justifies them living selfishly while claiming to be spiritual. When you point out the inconsistencies, they just say you haven't evolved to understand that contradictory things can be true. What nonsense! But Jesus didn't turn and walk away. He patiently reasoned with them, pointing to logic and history. Then He gave them an example to consider.

²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; ²² but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. Luke 11:21,22 Jesus gave them parable to consider. A strong man with armor can guard his palace from the attempts to steal what is his. But if a stronger man comes and takes away the armor in which the man had trusted, he can take away his possessions. A demon stood guard over this poor mute man as his possession. Jesus was stronger, disarmed the demon, and took the man as His own. That is what happens when anyone is saved (Colossians 1:13^{xxiii}). We are all like this mute man. We might not be demon possessed, but we were all property of Satan until Jesus brought us into His kingdom as His own (Ephesians 2:1-3^{xxiv}). That is what the people had observed. Jesus is stronger than Satan!

²³ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. Luke 11:23 Perhaps some of those who witnessed the miracle thought they would not side with Jesus or with His detractors, but there are only two sides in this

greatest of all conflicts. We are for Jesus or Satan. If we are not a part of the kingdom, acting as His agent to gather souls into His kingdom (and there are many roles in an army that all work together for victory) then we are scattering the sheep, so they are easier to attack. Sheep are safer when they are in a flock. No one lives a life without affecting others for good or evil. We bear good fruit of bad fruit, but we all bear fruit (Matthew 7:20^{xxv}). Our foundation is the rock or shifting sand (Luke 6:45^{xxvi}, 48,49^{xxvii}).

How can you tell whether you are gathering or scattering? Look at your priorities. What comes out of your heart? What do you pray for? Do you cause division among God's people or unity, build up the body of Christ or tear it down? These are all indications of which side you are on. It is rare that anyone declares they are on the side of Satan, but many will readily declare they are for themselves alone. We hear people say, "I did it MY way. My way or the highway. My head may be bloody, but it is unbowed. No one tells me what to do!" Each of these common phrases is a declaration against God. Pride is Satan's tool to keep us from the grace of God. It kept some in this crowd we are reading about from recognizing Jesus as Messiah, though they had waited for Him all their lives. Don't let it keep you from the grace, goodness, and purpose God has for you!

I heard a recording of something similar to our passage in the 1990s, though it was a physical problem, not a demon. A pastor's vocal chords had been damaged by a virus. He wasn't able to preach, but he could whisper into a mic. He had seen 200 doctors and over sixty specialists who had all told he would never be able to use his vocal chords again. A pastor wanted him to share Psalm 103, because he was the perfect person to explain that God can heal but doesn't always choose to heal. He was without the use of his vocal chords for three years. Listen carefully and you will get a sense of what those people witnessed when the mute man in our text was freed. (Play audio trac.) Did you feel a bit of what the crowd felt when Jesus cast the demon from the mute man? I played that for someone who had a spiritual bondage. Just hearing the power of God to heal set them free. Maybe the Holy Spirit is doing that right now for some of us! The Father longs to give His children good gifts. Freedom from the bondage of a secret sin, from unforgiveness, from anything that stands between you and a deeper walk with Jesus is yours if you will ask and receive.

Questions

- 1 Describe the setting for this account?
- 2 What was the crowd's response?
- 3 What was Jesus critics' response?
- 4 Why do you think they responded that way?
- 5 Why is that unforgivable?
- 6 What kind of sign were they seeking? Why?
- 7 Why won't skeptics accept the evidence?
- 8 What was Jesus' first logical rebuttal?
- 9 What was Jesus' second logical rebuttal?
- 10 What is the message of gathering or scattering?

ⁱ **Mark 9:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."

ⁱⁱ **Ephesians 1:7 (ESV)**

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

ⁱⁱⁱ **Luke 11:2 (ESV)**

² And he said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.

^{iv} **Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

^v **Philippians 2:13 (ESV)**

¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

^{vi} **Exodus 4:2-8 (ESV)**

² The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." ³ And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. ⁴ But the LORD said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— ⁵ "that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." ⁶ Again, the LORD said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. ⁷ Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. ⁸ "If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign.

^{vii} **Deuteronomy 18:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—

^{viii} **John 2:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

^{ix} **John 6:10-12 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost."

^x **John 9:32-33 (ESV)**

³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.

³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

^{xi} **John 6:2 (ESV)**

² And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.

^{xii} **Luke 7:12-15 (ESV)**

¹² As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. ¹³ And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴ Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." ¹⁵ And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

^{xiii} **Isaiah 42:6-7 (ESV)**

⁶ "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

^{xiv} **Isaiah 35:5-6 (ESV)**

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶ then shall the lame

man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

^{xv} **John 8:44 (ESV)**

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

^{xvi} **Matthew 16:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

^{xvii} **Luke 11:4 (ESV)**

⁴ and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."

^{xviii} **Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)**

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

^{xix} **John 3:2 (ESV)**

² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."

^{xx} **Mark 5:7 (ESV)**

⁷ And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me."

^{xxi} **Exodus 8:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

^{xxii} **1 Timothy 5:6 (ESV)**

⁶ but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.

^{xxiii} **Colossians 1:13 (ESV)**

¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,

^{xxiv} **Ephesians 2:1-3 (ESV)**

¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

^{xxv} **Matthew 7:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

^{xxvi} **Luke 6:45 (ESV)**

⁴⁵ The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

^{xxvii} **Luke 6:48-49 (ESV)**

⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.

⁴⁹ But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."