

A POWER CONFRONTATION DEFINED

LUKE 11:14-28

JESUS CLEARLY DEFINES THE NATURE AND POWER OF HIS MISSION AND HIS KINGDOM.

I. POWER DEMONSTRATED (VS 14)

Jesus came to set us free from the power of sin and bondage.

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II. POWER SOURCE QUESTIONED AND ANSWERED (VS 15-20)

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A Power Confrontation Defined

Luke 11:14-28

I think that as we continue our study through the Gospel of Luke, we must remind ourselves how Luke has arranged his material. For the most part, Luke has followed a broad chronological structure. The first part of Luke had to do with Jesus' preparation for ministry. Then Luke described Jesus' ministry in Galilee. We are now in the section where Luke describes Jesus' march towards Jerusalem, and in his last section, he will describe the final conflict in Jerusalem. So he has followed this broad chronological outline organized geographically. But as we have said before, within this broad outline, Luke has felt free to organize his material theologically so it would make sense to his readers. For example, both Matthew and Mark record this event but place it within a different time frame.

Therefore, here is what I want us to keep in mind as we study through this morning's passage. As Jesus progresses towards Jerusalem, He will run into more and more resistance and confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders. It will all come to a head in Jerusalem. We will definitely see the conflict level rise this morning. And it will continue to do so.

Secondly, this incident comes on right on the heels of Jesus teaching the disciples to pray. The main point about Jesus' teaching on prayer was that we pray to a loving Father Who desires to do good things for us. And further, this Father is the powerful God Who created and sustains the entire universe. He will one day conquer and destroy evil once and for all.

I also need to say this up front. When we do battle with Satan, demons, evil, and sin, our confrontation is not a power confrontation. Jesus took care of the power confrontation with Satan. By His death and resurrection, Jesus won the power confrontation for us for all eternity. Our battle with evil is always now a truth confrontation. When we battle Satan, demons, evil, and sin, our job is to replace Satan's lies to us with the truth. Jesus made it clear that it is the truth that sets us free.

This morning we will see Jesus engage in some power confrontations. Jesus will use truth to win these confrontations. Power confrontations happen all the time, especially in politics and in marriage.

Two political candidates were having a heated debate. Finally, one of them jumped up and yelled at the other, "What about the powerful special interest that controls you?"

Immediately the other politicians screamed back, "You leave my wife out of this!"

This morning we will see Jesus confronted by some of the Jewish leaders. Keep in mind the confrontation will build all the way to the cross. The main idea of this morning's text is this. JESUS CLEARLY DEFINES THE NATURE AND POWER OF HIS MISSION AND HIS KINGDOM. In other words, we need to remember that Jesus has said over and over again that with His arrival, the Kingdom of God has arrived as well. The Kingdom of God is in direct opposition to the kingdom of Satan and this world.

POWER DEMONSTRATED (VS 14)

In verse 14 we can see Kingdom power demonstrated by Jesus. JESUS CAME TO SET US FREE FROM THE POWER OF SIN AND BONDAGE. In the Gospel of John, Jesus described His mission like this:

"The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness" (John 10:10 / NLT).

The devil wants us to be in bondage to sin, to lust, to fear, and everything that prevents us from enjoying our relationship with God. Jesus came to set us free from this bondage. In order to get free and maintain our freedom, we have to understand the loving nature of God. As we studied through Jesus' teaching on prayer last time He asked us to imagine how much we love our children. After He hooked us by getting us to admit that we love our children and would do anything for their well being, He then said that God's love for us far surpasses our love because there is no sin in God and He has no self-interest. Jesus invites human beings to examine the loving nature of God when Jesus demonstrates that passionate loving nature as He allows Himself to be publicly humiliated, tortured, and executed. Jesus in the flesh gives us insight into the loving nature of God the Father.

And then Jesus demonstrates the loving work of God. It seems as if there were many people who were tormented and possessed by demons. We have seen many different types of demonization. Some demons caused psychological problems. Some demons caused physical disabilities. And some demons crippled people. Further, the Jews had religious people who functioned as exorcists. Casting out demons may have been rare but not unheard of.

Luke portrays this particular incident of muteness caused directly by a demon. We know that Jesus had compassion on the sick. He was broken hearted over people that were in bondage to Satan physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Jesus came to set the captives free. Luke doesn't embellish the incident. In fact he simply records it as a matter of fact. Jesus cast out the demon and the man who could not talk before now spoke. I think we need to look at this when we come across people who claim to have the power to exorcise demons or do miracles. There is no hoopla and there is no fanfare. For believers, these should be part of our everyday, matter of fact life. At this point in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus has been identified as the Promised Jewish Messiah and Jesus is in the business of doing Messiah stuff. Here he set a man free from demons that were preventing him from speaking.

And then we see Luke record the response to God's work. Luke simply says the crowd was amazed. This seems to be the common response of the crowd when Jesus performs a miracle. For the most part, the crowds have been awestruck with Jesus and their response has been one of respect. In some cases the amazement turned to fear. But in what follows, we will see the amazement turn to fear, anger, and resentment.

Before we leave this section I would like those of us who are believers to think about the miracle Jesus performed in our lives. Each one of us was an enemy of God. Each one of us was born into this world sinful, spiritually dead, and anti God. We were slaves to Satan. We were in bondage to sin, to fear, and to death. And then one day, we gave our lives to Christ and He set us free from all of that. He gave us new life and now we are free in Christ.

If you are not yet a believer, let me remind you that the Devil wants you in bondage to fear, to sin, to lust, and to death. His goal is to steal your joy, destroy your peace, and ultimately to kill you and take you to hell for an eternity. Jesus on the other hand wants to give you an abundant life filled with peace, joy, contentment and freedom. As He demonstrated in this healing, His nature is loving, He desires to do a work of love in your life, and the only thing He needs is an invitation from you to come in and make you whole. Will you do it? And for those of us who are believers, we need to remember this and remind one another of it. **JESUS CAME TO SET US FREE FROM THE POWER OF SIN AND BONDAGE.**

Jesus has just demonstrated the loving nature of God by healing a man who could not speak because he was possessed by a demon. Jesus had just performed a loving work of God that left people amazed. No doubt some were amazed into belief, but there were those who did not want to believe. Verses 15-20 describe the beginning of the conflict where Jesus' power source is questioned and answered. **JESUS INTELLECTUALLY AND LOGICALLY PROVES THAT HE IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS.** He has been claiming to be God's representative. Luke has been giving us evidence that Jesus is the Promised Jewish Messiah.

POWER SOURCE QUESTIONED AND ANSWERED (VS 15-20)

In verses 15-16, those who oppose Jesus present the questions. These are actually not questions. They are accusations that question the source of Jesus' power and authority. The first group accuses Jesus of driving out demons by the power and authority of Beelzebub. The accusers are just using this as a synonym for Satan or the Devil. It is clear who they are referring to because they add that this Beelzebub is the prince of demons. They are accusing Jesus of being driven and empowered by Satan. Let's remember at the beginning of Luke's Gospel that Jesus was tempted by Satan in this way. Satan offered all the kingdoms of the world to Jesus if only Jesus would bow down and worship him.

They do not challenge the fact that a mute man was possessed by a demon that prevented him from talking. They do not dispute the fact that the demon was cast

out or that the man was now healed. They do not dispute that Jesus was the agent in the healing. Their accusation is the source of Jesus' power.

Let's get to the name Beelzebub. The history of this goes way back into the Old Testament. The Canaanites worshiped a god named Baal with all sorts of combinations of the name. Beelzebub could mean "lord the exalted one," or something akin to that. We derive our English translation from the Latin which means "lord of the flies."

But it seems that one of the meanings of Beelzebub meant "lord of the temple," or "lord of the house." Keep this meaning in your mind as we watch Jesus argue against their accusation.

The next group is pictured as testing Jesus by asking Him for a sign from heaven. The Apostle Paul later said that one of the weaknesses of the Hebrews were that they were always looking for miraculous signs. What signs were they looking for? Jesus had been casting demons out of all sorts of people. He healed all sorts of illnesses. He miraculously fed a crowd of over 5,000 with only five loaves of bread and two fish. If that wasn't enough, he raised a young man from the dead on the way to the cemetery. Exactly what sign are they looking for? At His public baptism, the Holy Spirit descended on Him and the Father spoke from heaven saying, "You are My Son, Whom I love; with You I am well pleased." It seems as if there was nothing Jesus could do to convince them. If they wanted a sign from heaven, they had living proof standing before them. A man that was once mute and possessed by a demon was now speaking freely.

Sometimes I think that if I just say the right words to someone or phrase something perfectly, they will come to Christ in faith. But one thing we learn from Jesus' ministry is that people who refuse to believe do just that. They refuse to believe. There are no magical words or phrases that will get people to believe. These people saw Jesus in action and they refused to believe.

In verses 17-19 Jesus gives them the answers. Keep in mind that perhaps Jesus was translating Beelzebub as "lord of the house." Let's look at the very first phrase in verse 17. If people were really looking for a sign, here's one. Jesus read their minds. He answered their thoughts. His first answer is this. It makes no sense to say that Satan is working against Himself. Satan is out to enslave people and make them miserable. If Satan's goal is to enslave people, then how does it make sense that he has empowered Me to cast the demons out and set people free? He would be doing double work. First he would have to send demons to possess the guy and then I come along and set him free. How does that make sense? It's kind of like the salesman who was selling his wares at a loss. The boss asked him how he planned on making money and the salesman said, by selling big quantities. The stupidity is that the more items the guy sells at a loss the bigger losses he takes. He will never be able to make a profit that way.

Do you remember the translation “lord of the house” for Beelzebub? Here Jesus uses a phrase made popular by Abraham Lincoln in his speech declaring that the United States must settle the slavery issue. He said, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” By that he meant that the nation could not survive as a nation among other nations if it were not united. He was right. And Jesus’ point is that if Satan is fighting against Satan, his house cannot stand. It will fall. This is a simple logical argument.

The next answer Jesus gives His critics is also a logically devastating argument. Most of our English translations say something like, “Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, then by whom do your followers drive them out?” That is definitely what Jesus meant but the NASB follows the Greek wording. It says, “And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out?” The argument now takes on an emotional level. The word Jesus uses is not simply followers. He uses the word sons. So Jesus is actually saying this. I cast out demons. Your sons cast out demons. You assume your sons are casting out demons by the power and authority of God. I am doing the same exact work. How can you say I am casting out demons by the power of Satan? If you say that I am casting out demons by the power of Satan, then you have to say your sons are casting out demons by the power and authority of Satan.

Look at the end of verse 19. Jesus ends His argument by saying, “So then, they will be your judges.” There is a lot of debate and a lot of scholarly ink spilt over this phrase. However, I think if we just follow Jesus’ argument with simple minds, it simply means this. It doesn’t mean that the Jewish exorcists will become judges who help Jesus judge the living and the dead in the end times. It simply means this. If you can recognize the power and authority of God in their ministry, then you must see and recognize the power and authority of God in My ministry. So if you reject the power and authority of God in My ministry, you are willfully closing your eyes. Therefore, if you recognize the power and authority of God in your sons’ ministries, then you know better. Their very work has judged you as hardheartedly rejecting the truth of God. Jesus has intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and logically proved their accusations wrong.

But Jesus doesn’t just stop there. In verse 20 He makes sure to give them the conclusion of His argument. This is an extremely powerful statement, “But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.” First of all, let’s look at the phrase “by the finger of God.”

About 1500 years before Jesus said this, God’s people were in bondage to Egypt. God sent them Moses as a deliverer. God performed miracles through Moses and Aaron so that Pharaoh would set the Israelites free. Israel suffered together with the Egyptians during the first three plagues. When Moses and Aaron turned the water into blood, Pharaoh’s magicians duplicated that miraculous plague. Secondly, God sent an invasion of frogs throughout all of Egypt. Pharaoh’s magicians duplicated that miracle as well. Following that, God sent an infestation of gnats throughout the whole land. They tormented humans and animals alike. When

Pharaoh's magicians tried to duplicate that miracle they couldn't. Here was their conclusion:

"... This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19 / NIV)

I have two side notes to this story. First of all, people who are in bondage to the sin of pride will do all sorts of stupid things. God was sending plagues to Pharaoh. Because of pride, Pharaoh actually made the plagues worse by adding to them. Secondly, after this confession by Pharaoh's magicians that this was the finger of God, God separated His people the Israelites from the Egyptians and only the Egyptians experienced the rest of the plagues while God protected and sheltered the Israelites. God's finger finished off Egypt by killing the firstborn child and animal in every household. And then to top it all off, God drowned the entire Egyptian Army in the Red Sea. God dismantled and destroyed Pharaoh's kingdom in order to set His people free. He made a nation out of Israel that day and ultimately led them to the Promised Land.

Jesus is saying this. God sent Me to set His people free from the ravages of sin and the bondage of Satan. God's Kingdom is here and is on the move. I have been given the power and authority to invite anyone who wants to, to become part of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is also telling them that if they had been watching, they should easily be able to identify Him as the Promised Jewish Messiah. Over and over again throughout His ministry, JESUS INTELLECTUALLY AND LOGICALLY PROVES THAT HE IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS.

It seems to me that after these types of encounters in the Gospels, Jesus calls for a response. People are not allowed to remain neutral. They must either reject Him or receive Him. It is still the same today. Jesus does not allow for neutral or agnostic decisions. He will make that clear in this next section. In verses 21-28 we are called upon to make some power decisions. AFTER DEMONSTRATING AND DEFINING HIS POWER, JESUS CALLS FOR US TO MAKE A SERIES OF DECISIONS.

POWER DECISIONS (VS 21-28)

In verses 21-22, Jesus gives us an explanation of power. Here we find ourselves back at the "lord of the house" meaning of Beelzebub. Jesus portrays Satan as lord of this world. He has people bound to himself in all sorts of ways. People are bound by all sorts of lusts; sexual lust, lust for power, lust for money, lust for worldly things, lust for drugs, alcohol, pornography, etc. He has us bound by fear; fear of death, fear of judgment, fear of life itself. He has us from birth. He works through culture, family, friends, and the world at large. He is the prince of this world. He has us pretty well locked up. He guards his kingdom carefully and uses all his tools against us.

Jesus' point is this. If someone wants to rob that house, He will first have to disarm the strong man, destroy his weapons, overpower him and subdue him. Then he can rob and pillage the strong man's house. Jesus has been given the power and authority to disarm, defeat, break down, and pillage Satan's house.

Jesus has come to set you and me free from Satan's hold. No longer do we have to be controlled by lust of any kind. No longer do we have to fear judgment or death. Jesus came to give us an abundant life if we will just trust and follow Him. As I said earlier, our confrontation now with Satan is not a power confrontation. Our confrontation with Satan is merely to state and live the truth. Jesus won the power battle by His death and resurrection. And further, He has given us the Holy Spirit to provide us with the strength and wisdom to fight Satan with truth. We were saved by grace through faith and we live by grace through faith. We are now empowered by God's Holy Spirit to get free and to live free.

In verses 23-28 we learn some of the expected responses to the power of Jesus at work in our lives. When we first meet Jesus and experience His power and His love, we must make an initial decision as described in verse 23. Jesus doesn't give His audience much wiggle room. After He healed the man and successfully argued His status and authority He says this, "He who is not with Me is against me, and He who does not gather with me, scatters." There were only two possible responses then and there are only two possible responses today. Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Promised Jewish Messiah. He was God in the flesh. He is the Second Person in the Trinity. He is God the Son. He suffered and died for the forgiveness of our sins. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He says that every human being has only two choices. Either we will receive Him as our Lord and Savior or we will reject Him as our Lord and Savior. We will either help gather people into His Kingdom through salvation or we will lead people away from His Kingdom towards an eternity in hell.

When presented with the Gospel message, the only appropriate response is the one Paul gives:

"9For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved" (Romans 10:9-10 / NLT).

But salvation is much more than just saying these words. Salvation is a present activity in the sense we are being saved and a future activity in the sense that we will be saved. In verses 24-26 we are instructed that this is a continued commitment we make in following Jesus. When someone is demon possessed, it is relatively easy to get the person free. However, the person has to put up a good fight to remain free. We are warned several times to be alert, to be on guard, to run away from temptation, and to resist the devil. Jesus tells us that when someone gets free and a demon is cast out, the demon roams around looking for another place to live. Notice Jesus is using the house metaphor to describe our souls. Satan was the lord of our house. When the demons are cast out, the house is left empty. People start to live free and their soul starts to look and feel pretty good. However, the person themselves become the lord of their house. When the demon returns, he returns with seven more wicked spirits. They find the house all cleaned up and ready for them to move in and kick out the lord of the house which is a mere human. Now the person is worse off because when the demon was

kicked out, he was only one. But now there are eight of them. Jesus' point is this. We must fight and resist the devil every day. When Satan and his demons are kicked out of our house, our soul, we must invite Jesus to come in and become the Lord of our house. Here is a concept that we must understand. Jesus is not just our Savior. In other words, He is not just our life insurance policy that prevents us from going to hell. We don't remain lord of our life while using Jesus to keep us from hell. Jesus comes as a package deal. He is our Savior but He is also our Lord. In other words, no one can be "lord of our house" other than Jesus. He is Lord of the universe. He is Lord of heaven and earth. He must be Lord of our lives. If He is not the Lord of our lives, then He is also not our Savior. He must be both Lord and Savior.

And that's why verses 27-28 remind us that we must live in continued obedience. There is a woman in the audience that has just witnessed what Jesus has done and said. She is one that was amazed in a good way. She blurts out, "Blessed is the mother who gave You birth and nursed You." Jesus appears to be insulting His mother when He answers, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Listen to the way the NLT translates this:

"He replied, 'But even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice'" (Luke 11:28 / NLT).

He is saying, "Yes my mother is blessed but in addition to that, people who hear God's word and obey it are even more blessed." Let's remember why Mary was blessed. When the angel Gabriel told her the incredibly difficult assignment God had for her as a teenage girl, here is how Mary responded to God's request:

"38... I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to accept whatever he wants. May everything you have said come true. ..." (Luke 1:38 / NLT).

Mary is great, she is blessed, and she will be called blessed forever, because she submitted to God's plan for her life. She chose to obey God and submit to Him. Jesus was her Lord. She lived a life of obedience. That's the words and attitude that will keep us free in Christ and blessed. Can we submit to God like Mary did and can we say, "I am the Lord's servant and I am willing to accept whatever He wants.?" These are all choices that we must make. AFTER DEMONSTRATING AND DEFINING HIS POWER, JESUS CALLS FOR US TO MAKE A SERIES OF DECISIONS.

As we have seen this morning, Jesus has continued to display His power and authority. The confrontation between Jesus and Satan will steadily increase as He gets to Jerusalem. Satan will increasingly work through the religious leaders. In this morning's passage JESUS CLEARLY DEFINES THE NATURE AND POWER OF HIS MISSION AND HIS KINGDOM.

Sometimes we get confused because we confuse human power with spiritual power. Thomas Aquinas was a famous medieval theologian. He was once speaking with

Pope Innocent II while the pope was counting a large sum of money. The pope had equated money with power. He said to Thomas, "No longer can the church say, silver and gold have I none."

St. Thomas responded, "True Holy Father, but more importantly neither can the church any longer say, "Take up your mat and walk."

Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, and because of the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, we now have the power to live free. Let's make the words of Mary ours: "I am the Lord's servant and I am willing to accept whatever He wants."