**By the Finger of God**

Based on [Luke 11:14-28](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk11.14)

Preached on March 4, 2018

Third Sunday in Lent - Oculi

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In today’s scripture, Jesus casts out a demon. He meets criticism and opposition for doing so, and teaches that there is no neutrality in this spiritual warfare.

The lesson is about how the work of Satan in the world is coming to an end. Satan is the prince of this world. Under the veneer of technology, human advancement, western civilization and progress lies his dark and hidden power that is the real hindrance to mankind. “**For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places**” (Ephesians 6:12).

Jesus is our King. He came to wage war against the devil and his angels, and establish his church on earth. And the gates of hell will not prevail against it. The demonic forces cannot stop Jesus’ coming, They use whatever means are at their disposal to resist his efforts, but Satan’s kingdom is coming to an end. Jesus’ ability to casting out demons proves that he is sent from God.

Whether a teacher or a teaching is from God or from man is a crucial question. Elsewhere, Jesus asked the Pharisees to answer whether John the Baptist’s baptism was from God or from man, and that gets to the point. If the message is from God, you cannot deny the authority of the one who speaks it; if the message is from man, it has no real authority. So, no message stands on it’s own authority. The way a prophet proved his right to speak for God was through miraculous signs and wonders.

But the blindness and stubbornness of men won’t receive the kingdom of God. In this case, some men who saw the miracle argue that Jesus is casting out demons by Satan’s power. But Jesus, as a master teacher and rabbi, dismantles their argument and exposes their hearts.

First he exposes their hypocrisy. He says that they consider it a work of God when their sons cast out demons , but now when he does it, they conclude it’s a work of Satan. Why the double standard? **Because their hearts are hardened against Jesus and unreceptive to him.** And it doesn’t matter what he does, whether he cures cancer, ends world hunger, or anything. They do not judge him by his deeds, instead they judge him by his message. He comes calling them to repentance, teaching that the kingdom of God is near, and because he of what he preaches, they reject his miracle and would discredit him.

Next, Jesus exposes just how absurd their reasoning is, and how dull their understanding. Satan would not cast out demons, because Satan and demons are on the same side. They come to ravage, defile and destroy as much of this world as they can before the appointed time comes, when the Son of Man returns to cast them into the pit of hell forever. If Satan were to cast out demons, all the better…because then his kingdom would fall and he would lose his power. “**Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls.**” But they severely misunderstand Satan’s kingdom if they think he would destroy himself.

This leads to the only possible conclusion: If only God can cast out demons, and Jesus cast out demons, then Jesus is from God. It is only by the finger of God the demons flee. **As Jesus’ teaches, Satan is a strong man who keeps his house in order and his goods safe. He’s not going to leave the back door unlocked for thieves, he’s not going to tolerate infighting and disorder among his servants.** He earned his plunder, and knows what he’s doing in protecting it. So, if Satan loses his possessions, it is only because someone stronger than him has come into his house, overpowered him and plundered his goods.

Jesus is that stronger man. That’s what this means that he cast out demons. He comes with the authority of God and the demons shudder and beg him not to destroy them yet. In the Gospel of Mark, it is a demon that first acknowledges Jesus to be the Christ. ***They* know who He is, and what it means that he has come.**  It’s only men--deaf, dumb, and blind men--who can’t see the glory of God when it is being manifested in their presence. They are scoffers, and critics, ingrates and fools.

The fool says in his heart there is no God. Do not answer the fool in his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes (Prov. 26:5). **Jesus doesn’t go on arguing and proving what he has done, but he sobers them up with this: if then I am from God you should acknowledge the magnitude of what is happening.**  If I am from God, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and as God reveals his glory, and here you are standing as scoffers on the sidelines, now’s the time to repent.

It is a fearful thing to stand in the presence of the living God as they are. God is claiming his kingdom in their midst, and this means there is no fence riding or armchair quarterbacking in this spiritual battle. They have witnessed the very hand of God, his power and might, and they presume to criticize his work. **They think they can philosophize away this miraculous deed while standing on the sidelines, but they are wrong. There are no spectators, there is no neutral ground to stand on…God has acted.** And he’s not a performance artist for you to judge, he is the creator of heaven and earth whom you are to worship. You must acknowledge his deed or stand in contempt of God. You must receive the kingdom of God, or remain under the power of the devil. Jesus says, “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”

Jesus came 2000 years ago to usher in the kingdom of God . Against all odds, the Holy Spirit built his church upon the apostles and prophets, Christ being the cornerstone, and the church has not been destroyed. The gates of hell have not prevailed against it. **Christ has come, bringing forgiveness and salvation and the mercy of God for poor sinners in a world lost in the darkness of evil, corruption and spiritual decay.** And still people debate over whether he is the Saviour of the world.

Critical scholars of the bible think that, by their academic distance, they can use their powers to discern what parts of scripture to be accurate, what is myth, and what is pious fiction. **Television programming runs specials about “who is the real jesus” and “the lost tomb of Jesus”.** What in God’s Name to they think they are doing? They are like children playing with fire.. They presume to judge the work of God from the sidelines, not realizing the danger they are in.

If Jesus cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. If Jesus forgives sins by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God is at hand. If Jesus was raised from the dead by the finger of God, then the kindgom of God is coming for you. And like a thief in the night, all the academic weighing of evidence and enlightened skepticism are not going to save the person who squandered this time on earth. It is complete waste of time to explain away the miracles and wonders of the Son of God, who was sent to die for them. Such enlightened disrespect for Jesus still leaves an empty vessel for demonic influence. Jesus did miracles, not for them to doubt, poke and prod, but to hear the word of God and keep it.

There is no blessing of salvation for having an encyclopedic mind or being a gifted thinker. There is no eternal blessing for having been born into a christian family or in a christian culture. Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.