

Kingdom vs Kingdom

Luke 11:14-28

Sunday, April 12, 2025

After a two-week pause for Palm Sunday and Easter, we're back in Luke's Gospel. We're picking up in chapter 11, right where we left off — the passage that comes immediately after Jesus' teaching on the Lord's Prayer.

Luke sets the scene in verse 14. Some time after Jesus gave his disciples a lesson in how to pray, Luke tells us that,

“Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute” (11:14).¹

Throughout our journey through Luke's Gospel, we've seen Jesus come face to face with numerous people oppressed by demons. In chapter 4, we read about a man who came to the synagogue in Capernaum who was oppressed by an unclean spirit. Then in chapter 8, we read about an encounter Jesus had with a man possessed not by just one evil spirit, but by an entire legion of demons. In chapter 9, we then read about a father who brought his only son to Jesus, so that he might cast out the demon that continually tormented this boy. Stories of Jesus going toe-to-toe with the demonic realm are nothing new in Luke's Gospel.

But notice something unique about the encounter Luke describes in 11:14. We read that,

“Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed” (11:14).

That's it. In one verse, the exorcism is over and done with. We don't hear protest from the demon like we do elsewhere. We don't get a dialogue between Jesus and the evil spirit. All we're told is that Jesus casts out the demon, and the man who once was mute was able to speak. The healing happens quickly, but that's not the end of the story.

Look with me at the next two verses. In verses 15-16 we read,

“But some of them said, “By Beelzebul [Be-el-ze-bul], the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.” Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven” (11:15-16).

Before we unpack what this passage is teaching us, we need to understand what's going on here.

Luke doesn't tell us who in the crowd spoke in opposition to Jesus, but more than likely it was someone from the group of Pharisees mentioned later in this chapter. We'll get to their accusation in a moment, but first — don't miss a key premise hidden in their words.

Regardless of *how* Jesus was able to perform this miracle, his opponents readily admitted that Jesus was, in fact, “driving out demons” (11:15). This was no magic trick or illusion. That Jesus could cast out demons was undeniable.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the NIV Bible (The Holy Bible, New International Version, © 2011 by Biblical, Inc.)

The evidence was clear. Jesus met a man who was mute. We don't know if he was unable to speak from birth, or if his condition came about later in life. What we're told is that his inability to communicate was due to demonic oppression. Once Jesus cast out the demon, the formerly mute man was able to speak.

Though the account of this miracle in verse 14 is short and to the point, it establishes a fundamental truth about Jesus that runs through this entire passage: **Jesus' authority is undeniable**. As we work our way through the rest of this passage, keep that fundamental truth in mind. **Jesus' authority is undeniable**.

As we continue through this passage — and through the rest of Luke's Gospel — we'll discover that there are two typical responses to Jesus' undeniable authority: rejection or belief. There is no third option.

Jesus explicitly makes this point midway through this passage. Listen to what Jesus says in verse 23.

"Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters"
(11:23).

Jesus calls people to decide whether they are with him or against him.

But this kind of exclusive claim does not sit well in our "you do you" culture. So how can Jesus get away with such a seemingly intolerant statement?

If Jesus is merely one of many religious teachers that history has produced, offering his own brand of religious philosophy, then there is no good reason to take such an exclusive claim seriously. Anyone can claim to be an expert on anything, but the evidence must back up such claims. Either one has the authority to make such exclusive claims, or they don't. There is no third option.

But if Jesus is who Luke's Gospel has revealed him to be—the Son of God, then we must listen to him and take him at his word. We can accept or reject those claims, but our decision does not change the fundamental truth that Jesus' authority is undeniable.

The miracle described in verse 14 establishes this fundamental truth. But it does raise a legitimate question: His authority may be undeniable, but where did Jesus' authority come from? The challenge raised by Jesus' opponents in verses 15-16 suggested that his authority came not from heaven, but from hell itself.

"But some of them said, "By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons."
Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven" (11:15-16).

This kind of response to Jesus is as prevalent today as it was then. **Jesus' undeniable authority will be rejected by some and resisted by others**. Let's take a closer look at the two responses given in verses 15-16.

The group mentioned in verse 16 was reluctant to trust Jesus. They needed more proof. They wanted a conclusive sign from heaven that Jesus was who he said he was. We'll say more about this group next Sunday in the passage that follows. This morning, our focus will be on the group described in verse 15.

Whether or not Jesus' opponents truly believed that he derived his authority to cast out demons from the prince of demons himself, it seems that their intention was to slander Jesus and discredit him.

Don't listen to Jesus! He's in league with the devil!

Their attack on Jesus' character took the form of a logical fallacy known as an *ad hominem* argument. Rather than address the substance of a person's statement, in an *ad hominem* argument the opponent uses insult, abusive words, and sometimes profanity to undermine the credibility of the one making the claim.

People do this all the time, don't they? Rather than engage in a healthy dialog or a friendly debate, public figures, politicians, and yes, even pastors sometimes opt for a personal attack rather than offer a compelling argument. Not only do *ad hominem* attacks make the one using them appear foolish, they also reveal that the person behaving this way really isn't interested in making their case at all.

Let's be clear about what these opponents said about Jesus. They did more than insult him; they equated his ministry with the work of Satan. How would you respond if someone called you the devil's sidekick? Let's keep reading and see how Jesus responded. Look at verses 17-19.

"Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul. Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges" (11:17-19).

Jesus could have repaid the insult with his own insult, but the Lord took the high road instead. Rather than respond to a logical fallacy with a fallacy of his own, Jesus' answer took the form of a logical argument.

What you need to know about me is that I love passages like this. I was a philosophy major in college. I keep trying to get my kids to take a logic course in school. So far, I've had no takers. When Jesus puts his philosopher hat on, my ears perk up. But you don't need to be a logician or a philosopher to follow the Lord's train of thought here.

Jesus starts his argument in verse 17 with this premise:

"Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall" (11:17).

Some of you history buffs might recognize that this was the Scripture that Abraham Lincoln referenced in his famous House Divided speech in the lead up to the American Civil War. At the time, Lincoln was running for the U.S. Senate, and the major issue of the day was the spread of slavery in the territories. In his speech, Lincoln famously said,

“‘A house divided against itself, cannot stand.’ I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free.”²

Let’s keep our timeline straight. Jesus wasn’t quoting Lincoln; Lincoln was quoting Jesus, because Jesus was making a similar point in verse 18.

“If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul” (11:18).

For the sake of argument, if Jesus were driving out demons by the prince of demons, then in essence that would be a civil war within Satan’s kingdom. Why on earth would Satan authorize one demonic power to cast out another? Logically, it doesn’t make any sense. So the evidence does not suggest that Jesus derived his authority from Satan.

Not only that, but listen to what Jesus goes on to say in verse 19.

“Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges” (11:19).

While our modern familiarity with exorcisms is limited to what we see depicted in horror films, in Jesus’ day casting out demons was not unheard of. It was somewhat common for spiritual leaders within Judaism to engage in exorcisms. Likewise, remember that in the previous chapter, Jesus had sent out seventy-two of his followers with the authority to cast out demons.

So Jesus’ follow-up question was essentially this: “If I am casting out demons—as you suggest—by the power of Satan, by whom are others likewise casting out evil spirits? If you deem my ministry to be satanic in nature, then what does that say about others?” What does the evidence suggest?

It’s at this point that Jesus offers a better explanation. Look with me at verse 20.

“But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (11:20).

If the charge that Jesus’ authority comes from the devil is shown to be illogical, then the only other alternative is that his undeniable authority must come from God. And if Jesus’ ministry is in league with heaven and not hell, then the evidence would suggest that the kingdom of God was winning the war against the kingdom of darkness.

Jesus illustrates this point in verses 21 and 22 with a brief parable.

² <https://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/house.htm>

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

As we’ve seen again and again in Luke's Gospel, Jesus the Son of God has come to rescue us from the kingdom of darkness and bring us into the kingdom of God. And in story after story, we have repeatedly witnessed Jesus’ undeniable authority to do so. When people respond to Jesus in faith and obedience, they experience true and lasting transformation.

And yet, those who persist in their rejection and resistance to Christ, end up more like the person described in verses 24-26.

“When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first” (11:24-26).

On the outside, their lives might appear to be “clean and put in order,” but in their hearts they are completely exposed and vulnerable to an enemy that desires nothing more than to defile and bring disorder. What they need is not reformation, but true and lasting transformation.

Let’s pause here and think about what all of this means for us today. What the passage has shown us thus far is that Jesus’ undeniable authority will be rejected by some and resisted by others. What many of us recognize as undeniable, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, others in our world resist or outright reject.

When it is faceless, nameless people who resist or reject Jesus’ undeniable authority, we’re saddened, but we accept this as the unfortunate reality of living in a fallen world.

But we all know people who are close to us who do not see Jesus’ undeniable authority as we do. Some of these friends and loved ones are resistant to the Jesus revealed in Scripture. Others reject him outright. Whether these people we care so much about are antagonistic to the gospel or are just apathetic, we wish that there was something we could say that would open their eyes to the truth, and convince them of the reason for our hope in Christ.

To us, the gospel seems so clear, so logical that it’s unimaginable that anyone could deny its truth. And yet, every day, all over the world, people continue to resist or reject the undeniable authority of Jesus. How should we respond?

Might I suggest that we follow Jesus’ example and remain prayerful, patient, yet persistent. Let me touch on each of these quickly.

First, let us follow Jesus’ example and remain *prayerful*. Isn’t it interesting that this passage follows immediately after Jesus’ teaching on prayer? What did we learn from Jesus in the school of prayer? We learned to pray regularly that God’s kingdom would come. We learned to pray

consistently that we might forgive others as we have been forgiven. We learned that we are to come to our Heavenly Father and ask, seek, and knock. Folks, if there are people in your life who are resisting or rejecting the undeniable authority of Jesus, then let's follow Jesus' example and remain prayerful.

Second, let us follow Jesus' example and remain *patient*. The Apostle Peter says it this way of Jesus in the first of his letters.

“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly” (1 Pet. 2:21-23).

When someone slanders you for your faith or belittles your beliefs, remember that Jesus himself once was accused of being in league with the devil. I can think of no greater insult than to call the Son of God the sidekick of Satan. And yet Jesus demonstrated patience with his opponents, even in the face of slander. Let us remain patient with those who reject or resist Jesus.

Third, let us follow Jesus' example and be *persistent*. Jesus knew that no one enters the kingdom by means of reason alone, but that faith and repentance are the result of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit within a person. Jesus knew that argument alone would not bring about salvation. That said, Jesus used logic and sound arguments to demonstrate the reasonableness of placing one's faith in him.

In the same letter I just referenced, the Apostle Peter said to believers,

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander” (1 Pet. 3:15-16).

Some of you may be familiar with the area of study known as *apologetics*. The term “apologetics” refers to the discipline of demonstrating the reasonableness of Christian faith through persuasive argument.

Though apologetics can be a scholarly discipline, as we've just read from 1 Peter 3, it is also something that every Christian should seek a basic understanding of. Fortunately for us, there are numerous resources out there that can help equip us in this area, such as the works of C.S. Lewis, Lee Strobel, and, in more recent times, from people like Wes Huff and the Ministry of Apologetics Canada.

Engaging in apologetics is not a surefire way to lead a person into the Kingdom. As we see from Jesus' own example, sometimes these are the means that God uses to reveal the truth of the gospel to those who reject or resist the undeniable authority of Jesus Christ.

In this passage, we've discovered a fundamental truth that Jesus' authority is undeniable. At the same time, we've also seen that Jesus' undeniable authority will be rejected by some and resisted by others. How are we to respond when others resist or reject Jesus' undeniable authority? As we engage with those who keep Jesus at arms length, let us follow the Lord's example and remain prayerful, patient, yet persistent in our witness.

Let's pray.