

Lining Up With the Liberator of Souls

Luke 11:17-26

April 19, 2020

Back once again to Luke's Gospel. Turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 11. That's where we are in, in, God's providence. We are in Luke chapter 11 and we're looking at Jesus and his ministry of exorcism; casting out demons. One of the, one of the things I like about that song we sang earlier: *The God of Abraham Praise*. It says, in that first line, "The God of Abraham praise who reigns enthroned above. Ancient of everlasting days and God of love."

I, I especially like that part, the ancient of everlasting days, because it reminds us that our God is timeless. That he is eternal. That he reigns on his throne above all things. Even though he is intimately and imminently involved in human life, and the world around us. He exists eternally. He is infinite. He is unchanging. And we are so grateful, that, that, means he has an unchanging faithfulness. He is steady on. He's not fazed by any of the things that we're fazed by.

There is no disorientation for him, during a time like this, like it is for us. It's everything, for us, is upended and life is strange and it's changing all the time. I think probably next week I'll have to be preaching with a mask on and that's going to be a challenge, as well.

So, it's just, it's just, a strange time. But for God, that is never the case. Nothing fazes him. He is unchanging and he is unaffected by the changes here, and these are changes that he ordains. And one of the things I really appreciate about expository preaching is that week by week we are moving through the text and we are following the argument of the Holy Spirit in the written, divinely inspired word of God.

There is a change in our world, and yet there is a, a, sameness to our ministry week by week. We continue to develop the same things. We're not going to stop and have a bunch of sermons on COVID crisis and all the rest. Even though we do need to process some of that. We've tried, to try, to do some of that processing, in different ways and different ministries here.

But the core of our church is going to be built on an expository ministry in the word of God that, that follows the pattern of the ancient of days, who does not change. He is everlasting, and he is immutable, and he has us, in Luke's Gospel. And we're so grateful that we can back out of the current crisis, and whatever it is, and look at a text. It really has nothing to do with the COVID crisis and yet it's going to speak so much to it. It's the wisdom of God, in the wisdom of Christ, in shepherding this church, that I'm speaking of and, and I know that you see that week by week, as we pass through Luke's Gospel.

So, we're in Luke 11. You should be there in your Bibles. We're looking at verse 14 and looking at the effect in Israel of unbelief. The effect of unbelief in this groundswell of rejection, that is, building up among the people. There's this latent attitude of unbelief, and it's stoked and fanned into a flame by the religious leaders, who are filled with pride and filled with envy in Israel. And eventually they lead all the people to cry out, "Crucify him, crucify him. Let his blood be on us, and our children." That is an amazing, amazing, degree of responsibility, that they would take in the death of Jesus Christ, as a people.

Look at Luke 11:14 to 16. This is what we covered last time, when we were in Luke's gospel. But it says there that Jesus "was casting out a demon that was mute. And when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. But some of them said, 'He cast out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,' while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven."

So, Jesus came, as we said, he came to proclaim liberty to the captives, and then not just to proclaim, but then to do it. He came to set the prisoners free. And here we see an example of that. He's come to proclaim, and he's come to do. To set the prisoners free. To liberate captives. And his words and his actions, at this time, as we've just seen, could not be more greatly misinterpreted and maligned. Is there any more severe discrediting of Jesus ministry that could come, then by accusing him of doing his work by the power of Satan himself?

We're going to study the demand for a sign from the people next time, as we come together. But for today, we want to look at verses 17 to 26 and how Jesus answered this baseless,

ridiculous charge, that he's in league with Satan. Amazing how in this text he not only answers that charge sufficiently, completely, adequately, but he also turns that charge into an opportunity. He exposes their latent unbelief.

He corrects their theology, even. And then he confronts them, at the end of the passage, calling them to repent and believe. Even though he doesn't say, "Repent and believe," that's what he's doing. He's calling them to believe him and follow him. Verse 17, it tells us, in that, as we get into the text here. Tell, Luke tells us there, that Jesus knows their thoughts. He knows all the thoughts of the people there. He knows their reasoning.

He knows the conclusions that they've come to and this kind of indicates, it gives us a little bit of a picture into what was going on in the crowd that day. It indicates this, Beelzebul charge, was sort of whispered through the crowd. This slander was starting to spread through the crowd, quietly passing from ear to ear, as it were.

They're kind of murmuring among themselves, but Jesus knew what was going on. Whether this is an indication into omniscient insight, into what was going on, at the time, granted to him by God, by the spirit, or whether it's, Jes, an indication of Jesus' sanctified reasoning, unhindered by any sin. He can read the crowd. He knows what's going on in their minds. Perhaps he's even hearing some of that speech coming to him. He knows what's going on. He knows their thoughts.

The word, thoughts, there, by the way, refers, not to just thinking, per say, but the end product of a thought process. So, he, this is, it's talking, the word is talking about the result of their reasoning. The product of their thoughtful consideration. So, there's a reasoning process and, then, they come to this conclusion, you might say. And he's able to see that. He can discern it.

He's able to discern the condition of the crowd. He knows the thoughts of their hearts. Knows their doubts and suspicions. He knows how they've been provoked by the wicked envy of their leaders. And he knows they've got it all wrong. They've got it so drastically wrong. And so, Jesus follows this with his

gracious, loving confrontation of their thinking. This loving correction of the end result of their reasoning.

Jesus here is setting the record straight. Helping these bewitched spellbound people to discern the true purpose of his mission. Jesus came, here in this text, to divide and then conquer and then liberate Satan's kingdom. That ought to be obvious by now, right? It ought to be so clear. There should be no mistaking why Jesus came.

He came, as we've read before, Luke 4:18, he came "to proclaim liberty to the captives." He, also, came to set at liberty those who are oppressed. In other words, Jesus came to announce freedom and, then, to make good on that claim. To demonstrate that his announcement has power. It has strength. He actually did it. He actually set captives free. That's exactly what we saw in verse 14, as he delivered that man and allowed him to speak. He delivered that man from the mute demon. He did this many other times in Luke's Gospel as well. And throughout the gospels.

But because the people don't believe. Because they are unbelievers. Because they are prone to doubt and be suspicious. They can look away from what their eyes are telling them. They can turn away from what their ears have heard from him. And here they want to stay neutral. They, they, want to wait and see. And they are in danger by that approach, by that position of neutrality; not wanting to, kind of, balance themselves between Jesus and the religious leaders.

They are in danger here. Severe danger of tightening these chains that bind them. They are in danger of strengthening the power of demonic captors and ultimately worsening their condition. Christ came here to liberate their souls. It is so clear, it couldn't be more plain, more obvious, more in front of their face, in public, immediate healing, immediate casting out of demons.

So, anyone who refuses that liberation ministry. That liberating power and refused to join his liberating mission, listen, the demons are going to pounce on that soul. They are going to torment that soul. They are going to tighten their

grip, and seal the bondage of slavery, and the last state of that man is going to be worse than the first.

Let's, with that introduction, let's pick it up there at verse 17. Jesus knew their thoughts and he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I'll return to my house from which I came.' And when

it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. And then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first."

I hope you picked up on it. It should be very clear that that passage is full of militant language: Full of conflict, oriented language, warfare. There are dueling kingdoms and conquering armies and strong men fighting each other. In verses 17 to 19, if you look at it there, just summarizing that section: Divided kingdoms. They're laid waste. Divided households are falling. Occupying forces are being cast out.

Jesus has used the proper name Satan there: *Satanas*. It's a name that literally means, literally means, adversary. It refers to the personal supernatural evil being, not the forked tongued horned tailed, you know, red devil thing, that we see as a little cartoon figure. Not him! It refers to this supernatural being that is a constant adversary of God.

He's a creature, created by God. Created in the beginning along with all of his demonic hosts. Created in the beginning as

angels. Created good, along with all of God's other creation. But they fell. They rebelled. Led by Satan himself and he has become the murderous enemy of mankind. Hating the very image of God in their faces.

In verses 20 to 22, when Jesus says that kingdom of God has come upon you, conveys a sense of threatening, there. There's a, there's a battle, then that is illustrated between a strong man and a stronger man. Stronger attacks, overcomes the weaker, taking away his armor, dividing the spoil again. It's militant language. It's conflict.

Jesus saying here, there is a war going on folks. You have completely misinterpreted this. You've completely misunderstood the meaning of these signs. You need to understand there is a war going on, and every time I cast out a demon, it is another win in the battle, and you need to choose a side. That's what this passage is all about.

In verses 23 to 26, he makes that very clear. He's drawing a line in the sand. He is calling people to absolute allegiance. So, the kingdom of God, here, is pictured as an invading force.

It's landing on the beaches. It's marching into the territory that Satan thinks that is his. He thinks he occupies it. He's the owner. He's the one who exercised dominion. And so, he resents Jesus coming.

Jesus has come here, as the all-powerful, great liberator. He has instituted a draft, and he is summoning his troops to his side. He's saying, join me and join me now. He's calling for allegiance. So those are the sections there. I'll go over them again in a second. But that's just a brief introduction, to keep in mind.

Let's talk about how I'm dividing that text. We'll go back over those sections again and tell you how we're covering the ground this morning. We can see, there are three distinct units: Verses 17 to 19, verses 20 to 22, and verses 23 to 26. That may wreak a little bit of havoc with the way your publisher of your Bible has organized the text. It certainly does that in mine. But pay no mind to that. Just do, do, do, at least for the purposes of this sermon. Just do what I'm saying here. Break it up that way, because I think it will make sense in the end.

First, in verse 17, Jesus lays down just a common-sense principle, and then he follows it up with two common sense arguments, in verses 18 and 19. There's a principle in verse 17, and then two arguments based on that principle in verses 18 and 19.

Second, in that second section, verse 20 starts it off with an inescapable conclusion. Then he follows that up with an illustration in verses 21 to 22. So, he's got a conclusion, there, and then an illustration of that in verses 21 to 22.

And then, third, in verse 23, Jesus puts out a general call for absolute allegiance. This is his recruiting speech. And then he ends with an illustration in verses 24 to 26, to warn everyone about the mortal danger of disregarding that recruiting speech, for disregarding his offer.

So that's, that's, the flow; three sections, three points for today's outline, and I want to give you the main idea up front. I want to give you a bottom-line, main take away, you need to understand in this text. When Jesus cast out a demon and he is immediately discredited, and scorned, and spurned, and,

the, and then he's challenged, and put to the test. He is not ringing his hands over this sit, situation.

He's not, he's not wringing his hands over this concerted effort to sully his reputation, and discredit his ministry. It's not bothering him. I can imagine him shaking his head over this whole thing. Over the lengths to which his enemies, his opponents have gone to discredit him. He's marveling at that.

I'm certain that he's quite saddened because these are Jews. These are his own people. He's saddened by the effect on the crowds that are wavering in unbelief. But listen, Jesus is not worried at all. He is not worried that the messianic mission has been thwarted. That it has been stopped, in any measure, at all. It's not even a speed bump. It's not even a twig that he has to walk over.

He's not anxious for one second, that the liberation of sinners, and his mission, given him by God, will fail. So, he's not here to set the record straight and make his arguments, in order to convince unbelievers. He's not trying to say no, no, no, no, don't believe that. Believe me. He's not worried.

Rather, he's speaking to his people. And he's either strengthening faith or he's awakening faith. He's either strengthening the faith, of those who already are believing: Like his own disciples, the twelve. Those who followed with him. He's either strengthening their faith or he is awakening faith in those who are not yet believing.

So, for his disciples, and let's just say his disciples, then and now. For disciples, then and now, these words are power. These words are strength. They are hope. They are life. We need to hear that, don't we? As believers, we need to hear the words of Christ that are strength, and power, and hope, and life. So, listen, you believing people, take this in. Take his words and feed your faith. Feed it, strengthen it, and be strong in believing. Be courageous from conviction, in the faith.

To the many who are not yet disciples of Jesus Christ, then and now. For those who do not yet believe, listen closely, because I want you to hear the call of your great liberator. I want you to hear the call of the liberator, Jesus Christ, calling you to faith. Calling you to repent and believe. So, I

want you, I want you to wake up, wake up, repent, believe, find life, and freedom. I mean it.

Just take a look around at the world and see there is nothing here for us. The people who are in charge. They're doing their best. But listen, they cannot fix what ails us. Oh yeah, they're trying to find a vaccine for the coronavirus and all the rest, but listen, they find one vaccine, they're gonna, they're gonna have to find other vaccines, cause there are gonna be other pandemics that hit the world, as well. Other pestilences, other plagues, other tornadoes, other hurricanes.

There's, there's, a problem on this Earth, and the problem is not, in, at the atomic level. The problem is at the spiritual level. The problem is in the heart. We need heart solutions. We need a new heart. We need, a, new eyes to see, new ears to hear, a heart that will believe and respond in faith to Christ. And my friend, that's what you need.

So, wake up, repent, believe, find life and freedom, because the problem is not the coronavirus, it's not COVID, it is sin. S.I.N is the virus that has hit us all. We're all

plagued and we need the liberator, Jesus Christ. There are those of you, though, who are not disciples. You're not inclined to listen and repent. Follow in faith.

You're probably going to hear something like this, and scorn it as a bunch of myth. Religious mumbo jumbo. Stuff that doesn't actually count or do anything in the real world, or where the solutions are economic; the solutions are medical; the solutions are social. You're going to think, this is just a bunch of hot air. You're going to find no time for this.

I want you to listen, too. Because you need to listen and you need to take warning. There's a war going on and you've denied it. You reject the supernatural. You reject the reality of God. You reject the reality of demons. You scoff at the, the, the, red suited double horned tail, fork tail figure that's in the cartoon. You say, that's what they believe.

Listen. Jesus offers salvation now! He will give no quarter later. There is a battle and there is a war. A long war with truth and error. A long war between righteousness and unrighteousness. A long war of Satan rebelling against God. But

he is gonna come one day, put that to a complete and final end. He's going to cast Satan and all his demons into the lake of fire. Along with them, all who reject, all who reject the gospel.

So, my friend, now is the point of time to believe. Today is the day of salvation. If you will not believe; you've been put on notice; you've been warned. So, three points for this morning. Returning to the text: Jesus came to divide, conquer and liberate Satan's kingdom. Jesus came. He's representing the kingdom of God. He is the king himself. He is the great liberator and he came to divide, conquer and liberate the kingdom of Satan.

So, it's a simple outline: Divide, conquer and liberate. I want you to take that simple outline in. Own this. Find strength and confidence in it, if you are in the kingdom of God. And then share it with those who are in great need of liberation. They need to hear this message from you.

So, Jesus came to divide Satan's kingdom. That's point one. Jesus came to divide Satan's kingdom. Verse 17, again,

"Jesus, knowing their thoughts, he said to them, 'Every Kingdom divided against itself has laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his Kingdom stand? For you say I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.'" "

So again, common sense principle in verse 17. Just re, just reminding everybody about how the world works and he follows it up with two common sense arguments in verses 18 and 19. Common sense principle. Very easy to understand. Doesn't take a bunch of; look into the grammar and the language and everything else.

It's just this: Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste. A divided household falls. This is just plain. This is how we live in the world. It means this Beelzebul charge, that Jesus does, is exorcism work, of Beelzebul's demons. It's just stupid. This is utterly absurd. I mean, think back to, here in the United States. Think back to our recent wars. Fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda in Iraq, ISIS in Syria. Other places.

How much sense would it make for our troops, after winning such hard-fought ground, in rugged, rugged places on the Earth, with such heavy losses, and against such dangerous foes, and now that, that, ground has been won, now that we have replaced their bases with our bases, and put our staff in place, and everything else, set up everything, where they once were: How much sense would it be now for our forces to bomb our own bases. To drive out all the general and his staff. To drive out our own troops. To leave all that hard fought ground. Turn over to our enemies. How much sense does that make?

Try business illustration. What business owner is going to start a business, like some restaurant or something like that. Build up that restaurant, that business. Grow its menu, and its customers, and cause it to thrive, and really be a revenue generating business, a money maker. And then, that same business owner starts a competing restaurant right next door. Steals all the customers. Takes it away from the first one. Why is he going to go to all the effort of building the one, only to tear it down with the other?

We do not live the way they are charging Jesus. So, starting with this common sense: Divided kingdom is laid waste; it's ruin; it's laid desolate; it's destroyed and depopulated. A divided household, it can't stand. It can't thrive. It can't prosper. The division, internally, in that household renders it useless. I mean, this happened over and over with the Caesars, as people from their own house would come and depose them. Or you know assassinate or whatever, and someone else would. You'd see it in Israel's history, too.

Divided household can't stand. So, Jesus follows up the principle, with two arguments here. First in verse 18. Okay, so if that's true. Principle is true. It's how we live. We all understand that. If Satan also is divided against himself, verse 18, how will his kingdom stand? If, if it follows for the entire universe, why isn't, is Satan an exception? It's not hard to figure out here. It's plain and obvious, but it's going to help as we think about this.

We should back up and see the reasoning that went into the blasphemous accusation that came in verse 15. Jesus actually repeats it to the end of verse 18, "For you say that I cast out

demons by Beelzebul." So, what the religious leaders are proposing, here, is that Jesus is a witch. That he is a warlock and he is on this earth to do the bidding of Beelzebul, the prince of demons. To do his will. To put his will into effect.

So, this elaborate deception that's taken place, hatched in the mind of Satan himself, coming out of the bowels of hell, is that he is gonna send Jesus to go and cast out demons. He's going to send Jesus to fool everyone into thinking that he's the Messiah. And what would be the point and purpose of that? To capture everyone's souls for himself. That he might exercise dominion over them all.

Now that might seem to be a clever charge on the face of it. Until you realize that this supposition is totally absurd, when tested with just a bit of common sense. Because, here's the point, Satan already has dominion over the souls of men. He already has all that ground. Apostle John says plainly, first John 5:19, that "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." The whole world. Ephesians 2, One to three, "all unbelievers." They're already under this continuous influence of Satan. "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."

Satan's will is so dominant in the world among the unbelieving. So prevalent, so pervasive, that his influence is like the air that people breathe. They inhale his will and they exhale his will. They inhale his influence and they exhale his influence. So, the satanic will, the satanic mind, is like the native smell. No one can even detect it anymore. They're so used to it. It's like, it is the very taste of the unbelieving life, is the will of Satan. It's the feel of everything around them.

Unbelievers know nothing else, but Satan's will and dominion. So, Satan doesn't need to con, concoct some elaborate scheme to accomplish what is already a reality for him. To fool everyone, sending Jesus, as false Messiah to cast out demons, Satan already has everyone fooled. He already has everyone under his power, under his dominion. Possessing, oppressing, destroying human souls. That's what he does for sport.

That's his, that's his play time. That's what he does in his off time: Is destroy human Souls. Human souls, to him, to

his demons, are plunder. They are spoils. And Satan and his demons, they love to enjoy the fruit of their dominion, by occupying and destroying what they have. They're destructive. They are murderous. In order to carry out their rebellion against the, the, almighty, to continue their insurgency against their creator, since they can't strike the almighty himself, they strike the ones created in his image.

Why would they send an exorcist to take away their own plunder, when they already possessed that plunder? Not about to give up what they already have, because possessing and destroying human souls, that is what they exist for. That's how they enjoy the spoils. That's why they enjoy their goods. That is, the plunder itself and their enjoyment of it. And that's what Jesus is saying here.

Can, can, anyone tell me, here, based on this charge, why Satan is going to act against his self-interest? Can anybody tell me? Answer that question? The fact that his, the fact is, is that his kingdom is being divided up, right before their eyes. Very clear. Jesus just expelled a demon in public. He divided out yet another soul from under Satan's dominion. Taking

it away from Satan's kingdom. Satan didn't do that. "For if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand?"

There's a second counter argument, verse 19. And this just exposes their total inconsistency. It lays bare their total hypocrisy. He says, verse 19, "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out?" When he refers to "your sons," he's talking there in context. Historical context here, in the text.

He's talking about Jewish exorcists. They were, like maybe, you might say, compare them to today's charismatics, who like to pretend power over the demonic world. Claimed to cast out demons, they love to tell fantastic tales about their battles with demonic possession and, and, all the rest. And binding this and casting, that, that out and all the rest.

There have always been these kinds of conjurers and exorcists, witch doctors, shamans, in every single culture throughout the world, throughout time. I mean, even Saul himself, when he was possessed by a demon, he called for David to come and play. And, by David's playing, God graciously

granted some, some, repose and, and, from the oppression of that demon in Saul's soul.

So there seemed to be the minds of many people; well, there's a way for us to have some kind of power over demons. They just looked on a human level at David's playing and thought he had some way of conjuring away the demon. It's actually said of Solomon that he probably led astray by his thousands of foreign wives and concubines and all the rest. Led away by all their stuff, to come up with spells and incantations.

Josephus remarks about that, actually. In his older days Solomon, his heart drifted from the Lord, because his heart was led astray into false worship and false gods and all the rest. Sad to see, but it just gives testimony to the fact that the demonic and the spiritual world and everything else has always been a fascination for human beings.

So, there have been conjurers, and exorcists, and all the rest, who claim to have power over the demonic world. Casting this out, and casting spells, and conjuring this, and expelling that, but it is all a sham. It's all a fraud. The Jews had

theirs, and the scripture attests to it. Luke himself, in acts chapter 19, you may remember the story, it's kind of a, a, funny story actually. In the book of acts verse 13, writes, he writes about itinerant Jewish exorcists, who they undertook, at the time, to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits. Now this is in Ephesus. This is an Asia minor. It's modern-day Turkey. And these itinerant exorcists, they took the name of the Lord Jesus. Kind of like the charismatic frauds today. And they take the name of Jesus and, and, proclaim it over those who had evil spirit, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus, whom Paul preaches."

These guys are charlatans in Ephesus. They were extracting money from gullible people to deliver these phony exorcisms until they met some actual demons, who really put a beating on them. Remember what happened, Acts 19:15. To their surprise and dismay, this evil spirit actually answered them back. Shocked. And they said, "Jesus, I know. Paul, I recognize, but who are you?" You don't want to hear those words, not if you're a fraud. "The man in whom was the evil spirit leaped upon them, and mastered all of them, and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded, beaten and bloody."

Same thing today. Same thing today. Stories across the wire every month or so, of some Vatican approved exorcist or some charlatan with all these hair-raising tales of encounters with demons. The latest I read, came across in, in, one of the headlines, is Father Gabriel Amorth. He's, he's, peddling a book about his tales of exorcism. He claims, he claims, we have Vatican approved exorcist. He's claims 60,000 exorcisms over the span of about 30 years. Amazing, he's selling a book about it.

So, father Amorth, like the charismatic televangelists today, he claims that he once faced off with the devil himself. He was performing the right of liberation on a possessed man back in 1997. A little far back for any of us to verify anything, by the way, but he's dealing with this man, right of liberation, demanded the demon to tell him his name.

Demon said his name was Lucifer and then according to the tale, quote, "The man", this coming from the news story, "The man resumed his shrieking. Twisting his head back, rolling his eyes." I mean this is Hollywood stuff, right? So, "rolling his eyes, his back arched for a quarter of an hour. The room became extremely cold, and ice crystals formed on the windows and the

walls, and he ordered Lucifer to abandon the man. And his body stiffened, and began to levitate, hovering three or four feet in the air, for several minutes, before collapsing into a chair. Finally, Satan admitted defeat, announcing the exact day and hour when he would leave the man's body."

Like, how about now. Why don't you get him out now? The guy would really appreciate it, after being thrown around, and levitating, and all the rest. Unlike what we read in Scripture, right? When everything was immediate. Everything is public. Everything is right out in front and there's nothing, what's this ice crystal stuff. Isn't hell supposed to be hot? Shouldn't be like flames. I don't get all this.

PT Barnum purportedly said there's a sucker born every minute, and they're buying up all those guys books. There are even well-educated, articulate suckers, who are fooled into these fantastic tales.

Even the preeminent Josephus, passed on an exorcism story in the antiquities of the Jews, about this renowned exorcist named Eleazar, who cured people in this way. This is what he

says, quote, "He put a ring close to the nostrils of the possessed man under the bezel, of which there was enclosed one of the roots prescribed by Solomon. A root from the ground and he made him smell it. And, thus, gradually he drew out the demon through the nostrils. [Ooh] And then the man fell on the ground and the exorcist commanded the demon to return to him no more. Uttering all the while the name of Solomon.

"Reciting the incantations which he composed. Wishing to convince the bystanders of the power which he exercised." I mean, I think the exorcism enough, would be alone, would be enough proof, but Eleazar, he went even further. "He placed a little, placed a little way off, a cup or a basin full of water and he commanded the demon to overturn it as he went out of the man, and thereby to furnish proof to the spectators that he had really left the man."

Yeah, I'm going to throw a flag on that one. That is, that is totally ludicrous. And he's just, what he's got a wire over there. A string or a buddy knocking over a cup or blowing or I don't know what he's doing. But the Jews of Jesus' day, they imbibed all this stuff too. Religious leaders in particular.

They either believe that that stuff was true or being more sophisticated, maybe than the hoi polloi they, they, just let it go as harmless.

Just, maybe even for them, a useful deception that didn't threaten their power over the people. They didn't confront it. They didn't call it into question. They didn't correct it. When Jesus comes along, though, when Jesus comes along and he legitimately casts out demons with a word, and the entire personality of the demonized person changes before their eyes, and does so immediately. Permanently. No little cups of water for a demon to knock over on the way out. No exorcism fees. No book deals. Leaders don't deny the exorcism. None of the people do, but they do try to discredit him publicly, by aligning him and aligning his ministry with Satan. Totally inconsistent, right?

Totally inconsistent for them to ask no questions whatsoever about the Jewish exorcist. But, then immediately willing to apply the harshest criticisms, to arouse the darkest suspicions, among the people. They can't deny the truth of these publicly performed, readily verifiable, and let's point it out,

too, in Scripture. Completely understated. I mean none of this fantastical garbage we see in all these other accounts. This publicly performed, readily verifiable ministry of exorcism. Because of this, this blatant inconsistency this total hypocrisy.

Jesus says, verse 19, "Therefore." Therefore, he concludes at the end of verse 19, "Therefore they will be your judges." Who will be? They, that is the sons, your sons, your, these false exorcists, they will be your judges. They're gonna stand up at the final judgment and God is going to extract, like that guy pulling demons out of guys nostrils, he's going to extract from them truthful testimony at the judgment.

They're going to say something like this, these false exorcists, these charlatans. They're going to say, "Llook, I practice, I need to give testimony before almighty God, the judge who knows all things. He's judging the quick and the dead, and I here, I am standing before him and he's telling me I gotta give testimony.

"And here's my testimony. I practiced fake exorcism business for decades in Judea, decades. I fooled everybody. I was never questioned by the scribes, the Pharisees. I was never taken and questioned by the elders of the chief priests. In fact, I was giving them a little kickback on the side. Give them a little, putting a little money in their pockets on my exorcism fees. My book deals.

"Along comes this Jesus. He's doing what I could never do. He is actually, strangely, he's able to cast out demons with a word. And I don't understand it, but they pounce on him. They accuse him of casting out these demons by the devil's power. Did that make sense? Not at all. That's my testimony." Damning evidence of inconsistency, of partiality, of hypocrisy. That's what comes out in verse 19.

That's what Jesus is revealing to people. And, mark this folks, whenever you see the religious, especially those leaders, but the religious, criticizing other people by applying standards to them that they refuse to submit to for themselves, be sure that those people are under the judgment of God and their, religious, religiosity heightens the damning nature of

their sin. They are going to answer for that hypocrisy at the judgment. And in this divine irony, God is going to call those whom they favored with their hypocrisy, to testify against them before God, before all, that they are liars.

So, with the evidence of exorcism staring them in the face. With the legitimacy of Jesus ministry right before them, and a man who could not speak, now speaking. A man who was not in his right mind, now, he is clothed in his right mind. He can hold a conversation. The only conclusion they came to is this: Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebul. Ludicrous!

Jesus has clearly come to divide Satan's kingdom. Satan, is the one, is not the one dividing his own kingdom. If he were, his kingdom could not stand. So, the reality of the situation, it's about to hit them. It's about to hit them square in the face. Right between the eyes.

It brings us to point two, point number two: Jesus came to conquer Satan's kingdom. Jesus came to conquer Satan's kingdom. He doesn't leave it at a couple, a principle, a couple of arguments and then leave it there. He presses his advantage. He

puts an inescapable conclusion before them in verse 20. And then, he follows it up with an illustration in verses 21 to 22.

Conclusion is this verse 20, "But if it is by the finger of God, that I cast out demons. Then the kingdom of God has come upon you." Those words need to reverberate in their ears; "that the kingdom of God has come upon you." That expression may sound soft in the English translation, probably softer than it should. To get the sense, you might put it this way: If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come against you.

He's picturing the people here, the crowd here, as the opposing force against the kingdom of God. He's saying the kingdom of God has come against you or the kingdom of God has already overtaken you. That's how the New English Translation translates it. I think that's a good translation: Already overtaken you.

This is a picture of conquest and the kingdom of God is invading their land. The Jews who think that they are good, now that they've cast out Baal himself and Baal worship. They've

come back from the exile, having learned their lesson about worshipping all these other gods. And guess what? They're in the land and they're still seen as an, as an, opposing force to God's kingdom.

In fact, everywhere Jesus goes, demons start popping up. His ministry starts to expose, and pull, the pull, the masquerade, and the facade off of this religious land; the Holy Land. So many demons are populating it. I don't think there were any left in Babylon. So, there they are, fill, filling the land of, of the Holy Land, and it really is the unholy land.

This is a picture of conquest. And to make the point here that the kingdom of God has overtaken you; it's invaded; it's come; it's come against you. He provides the following illustration. Verse 21 says, "When a strong man, fully armed, he guards his own palace and his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and he divides up his spoil."

Picture here is going to be familiar in Roman occupied first century Judea, local regional Roman administrators had

palaces. Little castles. Fortresses were guarded by very well paid, very well armed soldiers. And since they were paid from the taxes that were extracted from the people of the land, well, the people resented that. Obviously foreign invaders, foreign occupiers, administering taxes that are pulled from us in order to further strengthen and fortify them.

We don't like this. We would knock that over, if we could. We would destroy that fortress, if we could. Perpetuated a system, here, that kept the people poor, and weak, and subservient. Kept the Romans strong, powerful, well provisioned, well-fortified. Elevated in those lofty perches looking down over the land, out of the reach of the common people.

Anyone who tried to attack one of these little mini fortresses, even if they succeeded in overpowering the armed contingent that was on the site, that'd bring the fury of Rome down on their heads. Because an attack on any Roman, and any land or, an, especially one that's assigned by Rome, like an administrator, a governor, or something like that, someone working for him, it's tantamount to an attack on Romans itself. That's why Herod aligned with Rome, because he knew that an

attack on him would draw in Roman power into his own little fiefdom.

There's no way of knocking out the strong man who's living in your homeland. Redistributing the plunder that he's taken from all of your people, unless you're ready to go to war with Rome. That's the idea. Now that illustration, this illustration, Jesus uses the verse 21, 22, it's going to strike an immediate chord with the people of the land. Because of this Roman occupation. Because of what they see around them.

But Jesus, you need to understand, he's not talking about Roman occupation here. He's not talking about rich administrators. All of their retinues of soldiers being well paid, well-armed, guarding their stuff that they've taken from the people. He's talking about Satan. Satan is the strong man. He is the illegitimate occupying force of the world, and he, Jesus, God's anointed, came to inaugurate the kingdom of God. He came to conquer Satan. He came to take David's throne and exercise his rule.

So, the strong man here is clearly Satan. The reference to him being fully armed and guarding the palace, keeping the goods safe; Satan and his demons. The palace that is described here, is, could be a courtyard or a fortress or whatever; but it's the world. The goods here in the illustration are human souls. Who's the stronger one? Well, of course the one stronger is clearly Jesus, referring to himself.

In this illustration, he's the one who defeats Satan. He did that, by the way, in the wilderness temptation. We see the first strike against Satan's power there. He's soon to do it again at the cross. In a, in a cosmic irony of cosmic proportions, he turns this apparent defeat into this eternal victory for himself and his beloved. Uses Satan's own weapon of death against him. In a way that Satan did not expect. I love the imagery here. Strong man, stronger man.

We tend to think of Jesus as being passive in his suffering, and he's just laying back on the ropes, taking a beating; punch, after punch, after punch. Think again. Think again. With everything he did, whether it was overcoming the devil in the wilderness. Whether it's casting out demon by

demon. Out of life from life. He's healing the sick. He's raising the dead. He's dying on the cross and rising again. We need to think about all of that, so very differently.

Jesus isn't on the ropes. He's not getting knocked to the ground by the devil. Not at all. How is Jesus portrayed here? He's the one stronger. He's entering into the fortress of the strong one, and notice the strong militant language here. This language of hostile intent, attacking initiative. We used to call it in, in, in, in a, in the military: Violence of aggression.

Jesus in verse 22, he attacks him, and he overcomes him. He attacks and he overpowers. And not only that, but Jesus just snatches away his armor in which he trusted. What armor is that, he's referring to? What weapons? What panoply? That's the name and the, the, word in the Greek *panoplia*.

What armor did the devil trust in? He trusts in a panoply of weapons, a whole armory. One of them is his power to tempt, to entice, to lead people into sin. And then once they sin, to accuse them for it. He loves that weapon. Loves to remind

sinner's of their guilt. Rub their failure in their faces. Loves to throw their shame in their faces, scandalize them. Especially before God.

Jesus overcame that cruel power. Never succumbing to one single sinful thought, not for a moment, not for a millisecond. He was tempted in all things, as we are, Hebrews 4:15, yet without sin. In Christ, sin's power is overcome. The accuser of the brethren, his tongue is ripped out of his mouth. He can't say a word against the sinless son of God, or against any of those for whom he has died.

The devil trusted in his other weapon, is a weapon to steal. Weapons to steal, kill and destroy. Jesus overcame that too. He overcame Satan. He guards his own. He protects them from falling beyond recovery. He's told Peter, before his crucifixion, he said, hey Peter, come here I got something to tell you. Just a little revelation for you. "Satan demanded to have you." I mean, I don't know about you. I'd be terrified. "Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat. Oh, but I've prayed for you. Your faith may not fail." Have a good day.

Jesus totally overcome Satan's power against Peter. Yeah, did Peter fall? Did Peter fail? Yes, he did. Jesus kept his faith from failing. He restored him back into ministry, John 21. Jesus overcomes the devil's cruelty in possessing and harming human victims. We see that over and over. He overcomes his ability to destroy their lives and kill them. He raises them from the dead. He gives them back, tenderly, to their loved ones.

He casts out demons, causing, that are causing injury and harm to people. Physical harm. And restores their lives and restores their relationship. He restores their social standing. He puts them back into the community. The devil has trusted ultimately in this super weapon; the ability to instill fear in people, because he holds the power of death over the heads of mortal sinful men.

Jesus plucked that weapon out of his hands, as well. He partook of flesh and blood. Hebrews 2:14 and 15 says, "He partook of that so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all

those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”

So having attacked the devil. Having overcome the devil. Having taken away the armor in which he trusted. Having taken over his fortresses. Walking around freely in his compound. Walking around in his dominion. Jesus, then, divides up the spoil. Jesus plundered the strongman. Satan distributed the goods that he was guarding so carefully.

As we said earlier. Satan's goods, they're human souls. Suffering in slavery to sin. Held captive and withering away in his dungeons. Languishing in the cold, without any light to give them comfort. It's a beautiful chapter in Isaiah, and I encourage you to read it this afternoon: Isaiah 49.

This is the biblical source of Jesus illustration, here. End of the chapter, Isaiah 49:24 to 25 says this, “Can the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant be rescued? For thus says the Lord; ‘Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant shall be

rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children.'" Beautiful, beautiful promise.

For those children, Christ "disarmed the rulers and authorities," Colossians 2:15, "put them to open shame by triumphing over, triumphing over them." For those children, he crushed the head of that ancient serpent, Genesis 3:15, and then, Ephesians 4:8, "When he ascended on high Christ led, host, a host of captives, he gave gifts to men." He did all that, in order, to save God's children.

This is what the church fathers, like Irenaeus, called *Christus Victor*. The victory of Christ over the powers of darkness. Over the devil himself. Jesus came to conquer Satan's kingdom, which happened, when he cast out demons, as it says in verse 20, "by the finger of God." That expression, by the way, isn't trying to say he's so powerful even his finger can do it. That's not the idea.

The expression actually is found first in Exodus 8:19, when the magicians of a pharaoh are trying to duplicate the power of God, seen in the miracles of Moses and Aaron. They're able to

mimic divine power with some of their tricks, at first. They eventually come to the end of their phony miracles and their tricks, when the plague of the gnats comes, when the gnats come, turned into gnats out of the dust. Aaron turned them into that, covered man, covered beasts throughout the land of Egypt.

And they're finally forced to admit before Pharaoh, right in his presence, we can't do any of this. We can't replicate this. This is the finger of God. He is, he is doing this. The finger of God at work and judging the demons of Egypt. It's the finger of God at work and cast, casting down the false gods, and the idols of Egypt. It's the finger of God destroying that superpower, drowning its army in the Red Sea, and now it's the finger of God here at work in judging the demons roaming through the land of God's chosen people.

Israel's, it's the finger of God now judging Israel's false religion. Promoted by these false shepherds. This alludes to the plagues that befell Egypt. It alludes to them because he's providing a warning to the people. This is a prelude of what comes next and the next point. So, Jesus came to divide Satan's kingdom to conquer Satan's kingdom's

Third final point: Jesus came to liberate Satan's kingdom. This Beezebul blasphemy, from the leaders, has left the people caught in two minds. On the one hand they can't deny what they've seen in Jesus' ministry. What they've heard in his teaching. He is unlike anyone they have ever heard before. He's unlike anything they've ever seen or even been told to them before. They are constantly amazed. Marveling all the time and all of his power, his works of wonder.

But on the other hand, now that the Jewish leaders have stepped up and shown themselves on the scene, they start to spread their poison and discredit him. Trying to accuse him of the greatest sin, of being in league with Satan. And now that they're weighing in with their authoritative judgments, their well-informed, well-studied opinions, all their research, and everything else, they start to lean on the crowd, a bit, with their pressure. They start to exert influence over the people and the people are suddenly unsure. Should I go with what I'm clearly seeing and know to be true, or should I submit to the fear of man?

That's why they asked Jesus, in verse 16, for more signs. Oh, we want heavenly signs, cosmic signs, this time, so we can know for sure you're coming from God. They're just buying time. They're just kicking the can down the road. They're just postponing the decision that they need to make. Jesus is about to remove this false protection that they think they have in their neutrality.

He's forcing them out of their hiding places of indecision and calling them to a verdict. Like the people of Israel throughout their history. This is their time. This is their time, in this moment, to make a decision, to choose this day which side that they're on. The same decision that we need to make, that's come to us, as well.

Just in the reading of this text to you, my friend, this is your time. This is your decision to make. Jesus says, verse 23, "Whoever is not with me is against me." What does he just say? He's turned up the heat. He is blowing into that fire and raising its temperature. He's pressing that argument into the conscience of every individual. You must pick a side. You must make a decision for or against. Says it twice there. Language

that pits him directly against the religious leaders, verse 23, "Whoever is not with me is against me." Those guys making that accusation. They're not with me, therefore, they're against me. You're gonna be on their side or mine.

Then he uses this shepherding metaphor. Which really, really, focuses on the shepherds of Israel. He says, "Whoever does not gather with me like a shepherd; scatters like a wolf." It's targeted folks. He's putting the bull's eye right on those religious leaders. He's putting himself on the opposite side of Israel's religious leaders, and he's telling them; it's either me or them. You make your choice. Only two choices ever, right?

Only two choices. You're either for Jesus or you're against him. You're either with him or you're against him. If you're with him, that means you are not passive and idle. You're, if you're with him, it means you're working with him. Means you're gathering with him. It means you're engaged in the work that he came to do; with, which is a shepherding, gathering work.

If you're not doing that, if you're pretending to be with him, but just sitting there idly twiddling your thumbs, and

singing praise songs, then you're actually working against him. You're actually on the side of the enemy. You're scattering the sheep, not gathering them. You're like, you're like some kind of wretched hireling, or worse, you're like a rapacious wolf, scattering the sheep. There's no middle ground. He does not leave any middle ground.

Those who think they stand safely in the middle ground of neutrality and some kind of a religious, sanctified agnosticism: It's a false refuge. Jesus wants to expose that here. It's a very dangerous place to be. Jesus said, "Many will say on that day, 'Lord, Lord.'" They'll claim to stand with him, yeah? Jesus is going to speak those terrifying words to those many people who said, "I never knew you." Never knew you. "Depart from me, you workers of iniquity. Depart from me you, prac, practice lawlessness."

You do your own thing. You suit yourself. Don't, don't, try to fool anybody, now, at the judgment. You've never served me. You've never served my interest. You've never followed my laws. You've never followed my rules. You've done iniquity. You've done your own thing. You've practiced lawlessness. You

better think now, Jesus is saying, while there's still time to repent, and believe, and obey, and gather with me to do my work.

Listen, beloved, stand with Christ and you'll stand with the stronger man. You stand with the one who has bound the strong man and he's put him to open shame, plundered his goods, and to stand with him means that you gather with him. You actually do his will, obey his word, do the work, and it's the only work that will stand the test of time.

For any of those who still think they can remain neutral about Jesus, refused to pick a side, Jesus adds a very powerful warning. He is compelling the non-committed to stop wavering between two opinions, that they might come and join his side.

Look at verses 24 to 26. This is the illustration. "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I'll return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and

dwell there. The last state of that person is worse than the first."

I like when he ends there, he says it's worse than first, but he doesn't say it's a permanent condition. The way he's stated that, leaves hope that there may still be escape. But listen, this is fascinating insight into the habits of demons, isn't it? Jesus, he's teaching our class here on demonology, we can safely consider him an expert in the field since he really created these angels in the first place. Since he created them in goodness like the rest of the world. And then he watched them fall from heaven and the rebellion of Lucifer.

He told his disciples, studied this back in chapter 10, verses 18 to 20, "I saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven. Meanwhile, I've given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. Nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

No such promises, for the uncommitted are there? No such promises for the cowardly and the unbelieving. Those who remain religiously agnostic. No such assurances for those who keep wavering between two opinions, who refuse to make a choice. For them, Jesus warns them, with the habits of the demons, as they depart from one of their human hosts. The Jews believed evil spirits roamed and wandered through restless places like wildernesses. They haunted desert places.

You know what's in the hot, waterless desert? Nothing. Nothing, but pain and death, and that which causes pain and death like serpents, scorpions and all the rest. Prickly things. There's hot, life leeching sand, in the desert. And that's why the devil met Jesus in such a place, because he trades in death.

Get this: After wandering through their favorite haunts, death in the wilderness and deserts, the unclean spirit goes back, where it finds actual rest and repose: In an unbelieving human heart. Let that sink in for a moment. Evil spirits, demons, unclean defiling spirits, they're more at home, and at rest, and at peace and comfort in an unbelieving heart, than they are wandering anywhere else.

If you're not a Christian, my friend, that should make, the, your skin crawl, more than some Hollywood movie about exorcism. This should make, your spin, your skin crawl and the hair stand up on the back of your neck. How creepy; that, an, a foul unclean demon would want to nestle into your soul.

Now if this unclean spirit, decide, decides to leave its host for a time, Jesus isn't actually saying, here, that the demon is cast out or whether it's just decided to take a little trip, a sightseeing vacation or whatever. But it's, say it travels for a time, maybe called off on other business or what, whatever? And there's no new occupant powerful enough to take up residence in that life, to claim ownership, to take possession over that soul and only one has the power to do so. The one stronger, that Jesus already talked about: Himself. And this demon is gonna come back from his desert vacation to wreak absolute havoc in that guy's life.

Demonic possession, every time you see it, in Scripture, it tears a person's soul apart. And when that demon leaves, the individual mind clears, yes, life gets back, gets back to some

semblance of normalcy. He can function again. He can talk. He cannot be in pain. Being thrown into fire or whatever the demons caused him to do. He can live without the domination of evil, without mental torment, without defiling speech, defiling behavior. On the outside, it looks like, what a wonderful reform, what deliverance, better living. He's voting conservative and everything.

When that demon gets back from his trip, though, it says, "I'll return to my house from which I came." Notice he still calls it my house. No change in ownership, just, to just a vacancy. And so, when it comes, verse 25, that demon finds moral reform. He finds that "house swept up and put back in order."

The word for order there is *cosmos*. It was well ordered, set up well, everything's put in place, got a budget going. He's got the house clean. He's got a job. He's, he's, he's, an upstanding citizen. He's moved into your neighborhood. Everything looks good.

Listen folks. This is why moral reform can never save the United States of America. Moral reform will not fix this place.

Moral legislation is not going to change a thing. It's going to just clean things up for a little while. Sweep the floor. Throw away the garbage. Put all the furniture back in place, that the demons cast around in their reveling and defiling behavior in the first place.

But what this country needs. What all countries need. What all citizens, wherever they live, of Satan's kingdom, need. It's not moral reform. It's not better laws. It's not stricter penalties for criminals and all the rest; that would be good. What we need is Christ. To cast out the demons, yes to, but to regenerate us to new life. To give us a new heart, a new spirit, and then to send his Holy Spirit to take up residence within us.

In our hearts, we need exorcism, folks. Spiritual regeneration and the indwelling abiding presence of God himself by the spirit. Anything else is just rearranging deck furniture on the Titanic. If it doesn't happen. If we stay at the level of moral reform only, look what happens in verse 26. That pesky, insolent demon, "He goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself. And they enter and dwell there." Person's life

becomes like a demon frat house. "Last state of that person is worse than the first."

Number seven, there and indicates completion. Jesus is warning everyone. The spiritual war here is for keeps. Demons aren't playing around at all. They know what's at stake. They intend to seal off that person's life, dominate his will, ruin his personality, drive away all his friends, degrade, defile, destroy his body. They want to put that individual beyond, this soul beyond reach. That's their intent.

In truth, as we said, no one is out of Christ' reach. No soul is beyond his power to liberate, to rescue, and to save. Earlier in our study of Luke's Gospel, in Luke 8:2, we read Jesus liberated Mary Magdalene. Out of whom, from whom, seven demons had gone out. Seven demons, the number of completion. She was overtaken. She was being defiled. She was being degraded and Christ snatched her from the strongman.

Later in the same eighth chapter, we saw Jesus' power to expel the so proclaimed, self-proclaimed, legion from the Gerasenes demoniac. The man who had lived among the tombs. No

one could bind that guy anymore, not even with a chain. He'd often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart. Amazing strength. Broke the shackles in pieces. No one had strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs, among the mountains, he was always crying out like a haunting ghost, out there among the tombs. Cutting himself with stones. Yeah, he was a cutter. He was all the rest.

Look, Satan is a murderer from the beginning. He is the greatest mass murderer of all time, because he killed the human race. He took a gun called unbelief, and he put it into the hands of Adam and Eve. And then he enticed them and whispered to them until they pulled the trigger, transgressing the law of God.

Satan and his demonic hosts hate mankind, because we bear God's image. But Christ is greater. Christ is greater. He came as a preacher to proclaim liberty to the captives. He came as a liberator to divide, and conquer, and liberate Satan's kingdom, and set the captives free. And so, my friend, you need to make a choice about Christ and you need to make it now.

You must repent, and believe, and follow the great liberator of souls. Line up in submission to his will. Join his side. Stand with him. Do the work of gathering with him. Be his, be his recruiters. Speak for him. Proclaim his name. Because if you don't, you stand with the one who scatters souls, and you will face the judgment.

Joshua back in the Old Testament, namesake of Jesus, by the way. Jesus is the Greek way of rendering the Hebrew name, Joshua, and Joshua means the Lord's salvation: The Lord is my salvation. Joshua put, put it to the people of Israel in his day, this way. He said, "Put away the gods that your father served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, to serve Yahweh, choose this day whom you will serve, whether it's the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Prophet Elijah, he put it to the people of his day, "How long would you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, serve, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

When the fire of the Lord fell, consumed the burnt offering, and all the wood, and the stones, and the dust on the altar, and licked up the water that was in the trench, all the people saw it, and they fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, he is God. The Lord, he is God."

And now Jesus puts this question to you, to me. Will you stand with me? Will you gather souls for the kingdom or will you stand against me and scatter along with all the Satanic forces? Will you fall under his destruction and his judgment for yourself? Let's line up with the liberator of souls. Amen!

Will you bow with me in prayer? Our Father, thank you for your kindness in sending the Lord Jesus Christ. We live day by day in this world, flesh and blood world. Seeing material things, physical things. We live. We are bound by space and time. We're subject to all the effects of time and limitations of space, limitations of power, energy and all the rest. And Father, it's very true that we don't get it. We don't see as you see. We don't see, as Jesus sees. And yet, you sent him to teach us the truth. To tell us the truth about how things really are.

And we've seen in this passage, so clearly, that he came to divide and conquer and liberate, the dominion of Satan, and win souls for you. To make subjects and citizens for your kingdom. And Father, for those of us who believe, we thank you so much for forgiving us of our sins. For taking away the enemy's weapons. For, for rendering powerless the power of sin. For taking away the penalty of sin, and the fear of death.

And Father, one day we look to be in your presence, as Jacqueline now is. As so many others of our members have graduated and gone to your presence: They're without the very presence of sin itself. They're in your glorious consummation of hope and redemption, and they gaze upon your goodness and your glory, in the presence of Christ.

Father, help us to line up with your son, your beloved son. May your name be sanctified, may be regarded as holy, even now on this earth, especially at this time. Draw that line in the sand and help us to draw that line for others and point them to Christ. He is the lib, liberator of our souls and we want to line up under him. Thank you. In Jesus name, amen.