

The Kingdom Of God Versus The Kingdom Of Satan.

Text: Luke 11:14-28

1) The nature of the struggle

Suggested Hymns:

2) The assurance of the victory

518, 296, 195, 51, 341

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 11:14-28, ***¹⁴ And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled. ¹⁵ But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." ¹⁶ Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven.***

¹⁷ But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls.

¹⁸ "If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub. ¹⁹ "And if I cast out demons

by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁰ "But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the

kingdom of God has come upon you. ²¹ "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. ²² "But when a stronger than he

comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. ²³ "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

²⁴ "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I

came.' ²⁵ "And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. ²⁶ "Then he

goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

²⁷ And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You,

and the breasts which nursed You!" ²⁸ But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We are living in an time in which many people deny the existence of a personal devil. When a person declares that he believes in the existence of a personal devil other people label him as ignorant, superstitious, and credulous. Those who pride themselves on their modern, progressive thinking have no satisfactory explanation for the evil behaviour which daily thrusts itself upon their attention. But one thing they are sure of — it is not Satan-inspired.

When we look at the world about us, when we read the screaming headlines of the daily press, it seems to me that one cannot, but believe in a personal devil. So much happens day in and day out that can be explained in no other way — deeds so disgustingly repulsive, crimes so atrociously wicked, acts so brutal yet so lacking in motive. Clearly Satan and his agents are responsible for these deeds.

However, our belief in a personal devil does not rest on our observations and experience, but on the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. The Word of God is very clear on this point. In literally hundreds of places the Bible informs us of the existence of an evil spirit world, tells of its deadly influence on mankind, and admonishes people to resist the devil and to flee his temptations.

Our Lord, when He walked on the earth, did not have to dispute with men over the reality of the devil and demons. Oh, how often Jesus had to deal with that reality! How often He sighed and wept over the mischief they wrought! How often He had to wrestle against those principalities and powers, and challenge those rulers of the darkness of this world!

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us something of the nature of the struggle between the forces of good and evil, of the age-old warfare between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. We do well to give heed to His thought-provoking, comforting words. Let us consider The Kingdom of God Versus the Kingdom of Satan. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Kingdom Of God Versus The Kingdom Of Satan

The Nature Of The Struggle

It was a wonderful miracle our Lord performed on the occasion related in the Gospel when He drove the evil spirit out of a man who was dumb and thereby restored his gift of speech. One would think that every witness of that astounding work would have rejoiced that the wretched man had been freed from his misery. One would think that they would have been only too eager to praise his Healer for the good work He had done. And at least one who was present did just that, namely, a woman ***“from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You.”***

But there were others present who had steeled their hearts even against the evidence of their senses. They could not deny that the man had been healed, yet they tried to discredit the miracle by attributing it to the agency of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.¹ This remark was so obviously malicious that we are surprised our Lord even answered it. Yet Jesus did, saying, ***“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls. ¹⁸ “If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub.***

Jesus’ argument, in effect, is this: Give the devil his due. He may be more wicked than men, but he certainly is not as stupid as men sometimes are. The evil spirits would never be guilty of the folly of engaging in civil war, as is so often the case with human beings. They do, indeed, try to create factions among men, but give them credit for this, that they do not fight one another; which would be the case if one were to cast out demons through the ruler of the demons. Clearly the devil’s kingdom is not a divided house.

“But,” Jesus continues His argument, ***“if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.*** This miracle you have just witnessed, is not an indication that I am in league with the devil, but is positive proof that I am his implacable enemy. If it means anything at all, it means in Me, in My work, in My message, you have the means of entering the kingdom of God and of escaping the kingdom of Satan.

If there is one truth clearly brought out in the Scriptures and in the history of the Christian Church, it is this, that our Lord was the great opponent of Satan and his kingdom. The first promise of Jesus, given in the Garden of Eden, foretold this relentless struggle, when God, speaking to the devil, said in Genesis 3:15,¹⁵

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel. ”

The Apostle John gives us this explanation of Christ’s incarnation: ***“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”***² This holy warfare was Jesus’ real purpose of life on earth. With His miracles He displayed His superiority over the devil and drove him and his demons out of suffering humanity. With His teachings He taught people the truth whereby they are delivered from his kingdom. With His suffering and death Jesus stripped Satan of his right and power to accuse people of their sin. By His glorious resurrection He robbed death of its sting and the grave of its victory. And by His triumphant ascension Jesus robbed forever the devilish principalities and powers, openly triumphing over them.

And still to this day our blessed Lord, through the medium of His Word and Sacraments, is directing all His work against the kingdom of Satan. Do we not in Baptism publicly renounce *“the devil and all his works and all his ways?”* The Lord’s Supper, was it not instituted to assist the sinner in breaking away from the power of the devil?

The Church, was it not established by our Lord in order to call men out of the darkness of sin into His own marvellous light? The public proclamation of the Word, is it not one grand exhortation to people to receive the Kingdom of God into their hearts and to escape from the kingdom of sin?

Look to your own Christian experience for verification of this? Has your relationship to Christ ever caused you to do anything that was wrong? You have listened to many a sermon, you have read the Bible many a time in your home; what has been the effect of this? Has it ever delighted the Old Adam in you, or stimulated your desires to lustful action? Has it not rather created in your heart and will a stronger desire and determination to resist sin and to battle everything sinful?

You have partaken of the Lord’s Supper many a time; has your reception of Christ’s body and blood ever prompted you to commit a sin; has it not rather strengthened you in your determination to live a godly life?

Surely, in all this you have the witness of the Holy Spirit to your own spirit that Christ is of God and the enemy of all unrighteousness, as Paul also declares

in 2 Corinthians 6:14-15, *For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?* ¹⁵ *And what accord has Christ with Belial?*

2. The Kingdom Of God Versus The Kingdom Of Satan The Assurance Of Victory

In the great struggle between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan the victory of the former is certain, and we who look to Christ as our Champion may comfort ourselves with the assurance of victory.

Today's Gospel brings this truth home to us with crystal clarity. There Jesus says, *"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace."* ²² *"But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils."*

Jesus' meaning is clear, He is that Stronger One. It is Jesus who has penetrated into Satan's own palace and overcome him. Nor was this an idle boast on His part. Jesus had just given men an instance of His power over Satan by driving the evil spirit from a man.

During His public ministry Jesus often displayed this superiority. Think of the temptation in the wilderness when three times Satan had to slink away defeated. Think of the occasion in the synagogue of Capernaum when the mere presence of Jesus caused the unclean demon to cry out in Luke 4:34, *"Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are -- the Holy One of God!"* To which Jesus sharply replied, *"Be quiet, and come out of him!"* *And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him.*

But these were just preliminary skirmishes. The decisive battle came in Jesus' holy Passion. At that time Jesus said, *"The ruler of this world is coming,"* ³ and He went forth to meet him. And what an enormous struggle that was!

We err, my friends, if we regard the holy sufferings of Jesus chiefly as the result of the treachery of a Judas, the weakness of a Peter, the brow-beating of a Caiaphas, or the cowardice of a Pilate. These men were just the tools and slaves of the archenemy, the devil. It was the devil who so greatly tried Jesus' soul in

Gethsemane, vexed Him at Gabbatha, and sought to crush Him on Golgotha. But God be praised, he did not, could not, succeed. On the contrary, there Christ gave the old serpent that devastating blow from which he has never recovered.

Christ, of course, was our Champion in that mighty struggle. There He took away Satan's armour in which he trusted in order that it might not be used against us. There He cancelled the curse of our sin and removed the sting of our death. And because He has done this for us, we can be assured of victory.

With Luther we can sing:

*Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill,
They shall not overpower us.*

This assurance of faith is our supreme need in the battle we shall have to wage all our lifetime. When Satan accuses us of the sins of which we are guilty, we need to look to our Champion and say with all confidence: ***"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."***⁴ That is the one argument we may give for which Satan has no answer.

When he tempts us to yield to sin, when he would *"draw us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins,"*⁵ we need to point to our Saviour and say, *"He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person ... that I may be His own."* Shall I crucify Him anew by unholy living? Certainly Not!

Rather, ***"this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith. ⁵ Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"***⁶ ***"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."***⁷

Truly,

*With might of ours can naught be done,
Soon were our loss effected;
But for us fights the Valiant One,
Whom God Himself elected.*

We may be as weak and helpless as that great afflicted man in today's Gospel, but if in our conflict with the forces of evil we summon the help and the

power of the omnipotent Christ, then, truly, *“those who are with us are more than those who are with them,”*⁸ and we may be assured of ultimate victory.

3. The Kingdom Of God Versus The Kingdom Of Satan The Possibility Of Defeat

But a solemn admonition is very much in order here. Success in the battle against sin and Satan is assured us so long as we keep the eye of faith fixed on our divine Lord; but if we turn our backs on Him, thinking that we can “go it alone,” we are in for a dreadful surprise.

Hence this pointed warning from our Lord in the closing portion of the Gospel, ²⁴ *“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’* ²⁵ *“And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order.* ²⁶ *“Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”*

What our Lord wishes to impress on our minds here is the danger of a relapse, of falling a second time into the power of Satan. This can happen; it has happened often in the past; it can happen to you and to me. Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 10:12, ¹² *“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”*

Think of King Saul, once so humble, so obedient to the Lord, so God-fearing and godly; yet the Spirit of God departed from him, and the last picture we have of that pathetic monarch is that of a hopeless wreck.

Think of Judas, the intimate friend and disciple of Jesus; yet he permitted the devil to take over his life a second time, and with what disastrous results!

Think of Demas,⁹ once the esteemed co-worker of Paul. He preferred the pleasures of this world to the faith of Christ. He left his house *“swept and put in order,”* an open invitation to the unclean spirits, and they returned to take it over with terrifying finality.

Nor are these isolated cases. We could go on and on with examples from the Bible and down to the present day. How truly Jesus spoke when He said that the

last state of such a person is worse than the first! Indeed, what the Scripture has to say of such lost souls is enough to send icy chills up and down the spine.

God says in Hebrews 6:4-6, *‘For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.* From this preserve us, dear heavenly Father!

And God will. But He wants us to *“work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.”*¹⁰ God wants the Christian disciple to be on his guard, to “watch and pray” lest he come under the power of some insidious temptation. Therefore, let us not be satisfied with a weak faith; but strive to *“grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”*¹¹ until we have yielded ourselves wholeheartedly to Him. Only by so doing can we secure our souls amid the temptations of the devil.

May God in His mercy keep us on His side in the great battle that is being waged for the mastery of our souls! And may we make faithful use of the gracious means He has provided to fortify us against the wiles of our enemies, that, *“even though we are so tempted we may still win the final victory.”*¹² Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 12:24

² 1 John 3:8

³ John 14:30

⁴ 1 John 1:7

⁵ *Luther’s Small Catechism*, Lord’s Prayer, 6th Petition

⁶ 1 John 5:4-5

⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:57

⁸ 2 Kings 6:16

⁹ 2 Timothy 4:10

¹⁰ Philippians 2:12

¹¹ 2 Peter 3:18

¹² *Luther’s Small Catechism*, Lord’s Prayer, 6th Petition