

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Third Sunday In Lent, March 20, 2022**

✠ ✠ ✠

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 447, 10:1-2, 279, 453, 401.

Lessons: 2 Samuel 22:29-41, Romans 8:1-14, Matthew 12:22-30.

Sermon Text: Luke 11:14-23.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

**“Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute.”** These words tell us of a miracle that our Lord performed. He healed a person who was possessed by a demon or devil. The devil had caused the afflicted person to be dumb, that is, unable to speak. When the devil was cast out, the person was able to speak again. This miracle was a sign that Jesus was truly the Son of God, the promised Messiah. It was a sign to the people who saw it that God’s divine, saving rule through his powerful Word had come to them. But the people reacted in various ways to God’s divine power among them.

Some were amazed and wondered about this. Matthew records that **“the people were astonished and said, ‘Could this be the Son of David?’”** Matthew 12:23 (NIV) Some wanted even more miraculous signs: **“Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven.”**

But some accused Jesus of doing things by the power of the devil. When he responds to those people,

**JESUS’ MIRACLE BECOMES A TEACHING SITUATION**

- 1. People criticize Jesus for driving out a demon.**
- 2. Jesus uses this to emphasize that you are either with him or against him.**

Why this demon didn’t speak isn’t known. I think we all realize that Satan and all his allies are only too anxious to attack Jesus Christ in any way they can. And I think we all know that enemies of Christ will attack him using any media they can – spoken words, print, video, audio and face-to-face conversation.

Well, Satan found many allies in the people who observed this miracle. Although some were rightly amazed at the power of God, some claimed he was driving out demons by the power of Satan. This miracle surely shows the power of God, and it could be considered a sign from heaven, if only they accepted the fact that Jesus is the Son of God.

But Jesus especially speaks to the accusation that he is driving out demons by the power of the devil. Luke now concentrates on the words of Jesus.

The Pharisees claimed that Jesus was able to cast out this demon through the power of Beelzebub (the god of flies) or Beelzebul (the god of dung), the prince and foremost of the demons. That was complete slander, and Jesus points out their false argument.

The word Beelzebub is another word used for Satan, based on a false god of the Ekronites, a Philistine city, referring to ‘lord of flies’, supposedly having the power to drive away troublesome flies.

Jesus, of course, as true God, knew their thoughts and he responds to the accusation that he was driving out demons by the power of the devil saying **“Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall.”** Civil wars within a nation are an example of this. In its history, the United States has been fortunate that after a terrible civil war in the 1860s the nation has endured for more than a century and a half and was not permanently split. Not every nation has been so blessed that it endures after a civil war. Of course, we pray that our nation endure and that is why we pray **“for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”** 1 Timothy 2:2 (NIV)

Jesus asks: ***“If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.”*** Apparently, some among the Jews were able to drive out demons, and Jesus speaks of them. ‘If I am using Satan’s power’, he asks, ‘weren’t your followers also using Satan’s power?’ If Jesus got his power from Satan, this would make Jesus a partner of Satan.

Jesus then uses another illustration. ***“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 the spoils.”*** In order to win in a fight, the winner must have some kind of superior strength.

Humans sometimes do accomplish works which appear to be miraculous. We have Scripture speaking of Egyptian sorcerers performing miracles at the time of Moses. There are even a few examples in the New Testament of people who were not followers of Jesus casting out demons and evil spirits. Jesus’ miracles are not black magic – actions done through the power of Satan – but are miracles worked by God.

Satan certainly is a strong and powerful being. He does all he can to guard his possessions, the people whom he controls. When Jesus miraculously takes these helpless victims out of the hand of the devil, then it shows that Jesus is the stronger one.

Every kingdom that is divided against itself is destroyed. Except by the grace of God, the natural result of revolution is dissolution.

If Jesus is in league with the prince of the devils, and yet cast out devils to their own harm and disgrace, then it follows that there is a division in the kingdom of the devil, and how will his kingdom then stand?

Then Jesus presents another argument. If that accusation were true and the power of Jesus over the demons were derived from Satan, how were they going to explain the fact that their own followers, their own disciples, were acting as exorcists, going through the country and attempting to cast out devils? By insisting on their explanation of Christ's ability, they were condemning themselves and their own followers would be their judges. But, on the other hand, if the miracles of casting out devils which Jesus performed were due to the true power of God, which is necessary to cast out demons, it was an indisputable proof that in and with Christ, the Prophet from Nazareth, the kingdom of God had come upon them. In his person and in his message they had the means of obtaining everlasting life if they would only accept the grace of God.

Jesus tries to show his audience what his coming into the world meant, so far as the rule of Satan was concerned. Satan, the devil, indeed, was a strong and mighty spirit, and was at all times fully armed, guarding his followers with all his power. For he is the prince of this world and has his work in the children of unbelief. Paul writes ***“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*** Ephesians 6:12 (NIV) And up till now Satan had held his own, without any trouble to speak of. All his subjects had been willing and obedient. But now the stronger one had come, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Messiah. He came upon the devil and vanquished him in this miracle. And more importantly, Jesus conquered the power of the devil, and death, and sin when he rose from the dead!

Then Jesus comes with this conclusion: ***“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.”***

Despite any desire and attempts to be on both sides of an issue, to try to take a stand on both sides of a fence, or even just to remain neutral, it just cannot be done when it comes to Jesus. Oh yes, there may be some who get away with such hypocrisy taking no stand at all against sin and evil. I think we have all seen or read about examples of people who try to be on both sides of an issue. They may say one thing to someone, and say something contradictory to someone else. They may do one thing one day, and something which contradicts their position the next day. But ultimately they will be seen for what and who they are.

Or, people may even try to be neutral and not take sides. In life we can be neutral or indifferent about many things – sports, a color of paint, what to eat for supper. But we can’t be neutral or indifferent about Jesus Christ.

Tolerance is highly valued by the sinful world, especially where sin is concerned. God clearly identifies what is sin. Man would like to ignore that or change people's minds about what God calls sin. Our world, our nation, our state and its cities are doing everything they can to soft-pedal sin and make everyone accept what they – the sinful unbelievers – accept and approve, even if God condemns it as sin.

But Jesus was not a person who tried to appear to be on both sides of an issue, particularly the matter of sin. He was not indifferent or neutral when it came to sin. He was, after all, true God as well as true man and always spoke truth and did what was right. We see today that his miracle emphasizes that you are either with Jesus or against him. And Jesus is emphasizing that one cannot remain indifferent or neutral or be both for and against Jesus.

To be with someone means you are on his or her side, you agree with that person, you support that person.

Those who don't stand with Jesus are on the side of the enemy. Those who don't work with Jesus in gathering people into God's kingdom are guilty of scattering. To link Christ and Satan as co-workers is not only foolish, it is blasphemy and hinders the work of the kingdom of God.

Ultimately, you can't be on both sides of an issue. You can't have a foot in both places and survive. You can't be for Christ and disagree with his teachings as revealed in the Bible. You can't be with Christ and reject him by your actions, your words, or your life.

The Gospel assures us that we are saved by the Grace of God through faith And God actually provides that faith as we confess in the explanation to the Third Article of the Creed: I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. And fruits of faith, fruits of daily contrition and repentance show themselves in our actions, our words, our lives.

Lord, let us always be with you! Please keep us safe and guide us each day that we may show to ourselves, our family, our neighbors and to the whole world that "we are the Lord's"! Amen.