Following Jesus on the Way to the Cross: The Influence of Satan and the Gift of the Holy Spirit

1. Read Luke 11:14–16, 23. What different responses do the crowds have to Jesus in this passage? According to verse 23, why is neutrality toward Jesus impossible? What spiritual problem is Jesus exposing here, and how can that same problem appear in the church today? People marvel at Jesus. People blaspheme Jesus. People test Jesus. No one believes in Jesus! Jesus faces crowds that are either neutral or against Him. But as he says. If you are not "FOR" Him then you are against Him. This can be a problem not just with an individual, but with the church. The church should be full of people who are FOR Jesus. But many times there can be people who are simply neutral. They belong to the church for any variety of reasons but not because they love Jesus and want to follow Him and obey His Word. This neutrality only tends to create division not unity in the Church.

2. Read Luke 11:13, 17–22, 24–26. What three spiritual realities does Jesus teach in these verses?

- **First, Jesus makes clear that Satan does not work against _____ himself.** A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Therefore, it makes no sense to accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul. Just as Satan does not war against his own demons, so also God the Father would never work against His Son. Jesus' works show that He is not an agent of Satan, but the very Son of God come to destroy the works of the devil. What the crowds are doing here is straight up blaspheme.

- **Second, Jesus teaches that this fallen world is under Satan's power by _____ nature.** Since the fall into sin, mankind is not spiritually neutral, but captive to sin, death, and the devil. Satan is the "strong man" who keeps hold of his goods—fallen human beings. But Jesus is the Stronger Man, who comes to overthrow Satan, bind him, and rescue sinners from his kingdom. Christ plunders Satan's house by redeeming sinners and bringing them into the kingdom of God.

- **Third, Jesus teaches that there is no lasting _____ neutrality in the spiritual life.** When an unclean spirit leaves, the empty house is in danger if it remains unfilled. In the same way, it is not enough merely to have evil cast out; a person must be filled with Christ and His gifts. This is a warning not only about demon possession, but also about the Christian life. Through the Word and Sacraments, Christ brings us from the devil's kingdom into His own. But apart from remaining in repentance and faith, apart from abiding in Christ through His means of grace, a person is in grave spiritual danger. Faith is not sustained by human effort, but by the Holy Spirit working through the Word. Therefore Christians are called to hear

the Word, receive the Sacraments, and daily live in repentance and faith, lest they fall away and become worse off than before.

Bonus Quesiton:
When you are forced to face the darkness within your own heart—your complacency, your resistance to Christ, and the times you have knowingly followed your sinful desires—how does verse 13 give you hope? Jesus means very bit of His promise to provide the Holy Spirit to all who ask. God is indeed generous with the Spirit. See Acts 2:38-39. The Holy Spirit is a gift that God loves to give to His children. In Holy Baptism we have receive the Spirit who never stops wanting to work the fruits of the Spirit in our lives. We should ask for this gift daily! In this way, Holy Baptism is an exorcism of sorts. And traditionally the question is asked: Do you renounce the Devil and all his works and all his ways? That is the very work that the Holy Spirit enables us to do—renouncing the ways of Satan.

_____

NOTE: The "waterless places" that Jesus mentions in verse 24 could just be poetic imagery describing the pointless, powerless, purposeless existence of Satan and his demons apart from God. All purpose and power in life comes from God. Satan can only find purpose in his efforts to turn us away from God. The idea that demons inhabit barren places is rich in the OT – Isaiah 12:21 and 34:14 (cf. Mark 1:12-13) and Leviticus 16:10 – the scapegoat being sent into the wilderness. Of course, Luke's gospel records that at the outset of Jesus' ministry, after His baptism and being "full of the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4:1), he was led into the wilderness to confront Satan.

❹ Read verses 27-36. How do each of these three sections clearly relate to everything we've discussed in question 2 above?

- † In verses 27-28, what is the true blessing that Jesus mentions in His response to the woman who blesses His mother? In hearing the Word and keeping it, the Holy Spirit does His work of creating and sustaining faith. We are kept from Satan's power and influence.
- † In verses 29-32, how does the sign of Jonah, the men of Nineveh, and the Queen of Sheba relate to Jesus the "strong man" who overcomes Satan's power over us? Christ like Jonah, who was as good as dead in the belly of the fish for three days, overcame the grave after three days. He's stronger even than death! The Queen of Sheba is a sign because she traveled from the ends of the earth to see what God was doing through Solomon. But Jesus is so much greater that Solomon. And the men of Nineveh repented. They recognized the kingdom of God at work through Jonah's word. How much more terrible is it for sinful man to reject the Word of Christ?
- † In verses 33-36, what is the connection between the lamp/light and the eye and Christ's teaching about spiritual neutrality? In Luke 11:33–36, Jesus uses the image of the lamp and the eye to say that a person is never spiritually "empty" or neutral: either the light is in you, or darkness is in you. Just as the empty house is unsafe, so also the person not enlightened by Christ is in darkness and danger. God's Word is the light that fills our house and all is good. When God's word is absent we are in danger and darkness. Either light rules us and shows us the "good way" of Christ, or darkness rules us and we stumble and fall into sin.

❹ Read Luke 11:37–54 and try to hear it like a Pharisee would. The Pharisees cared a lot about being clean, so Jesus' words would have sounded deeply offensive. He's not just saying they are unclean themselves, but that they are also leading others astray and getting in the way of God's salvation. No wonder they took His words as an insult.

At the same time, this passage is not just about them. It is easy to point out the Pharisees' hypocrisy, but we are not so different. We also tend to focus on outward appearances while ignoring the deeper problem in our hearts. So when Jesus confronts them, He is also confronting us.

But this passage should not only convict us. It should also point us to Jesus, who took the judgment our sin deserves. Even the Pharisees' opposition became part of God's plan to bring salvation through Christ.

Questions for discussion:

- ✝ If you were a Pharisee hearing Jesus speak in this passage, what part would feel most offensive or insulting? Why? Probably Jesus calling them inwardly unclean and saying they were leading others away from God. That would feel insulting because the Pharisees saw themselves as spiritual leaders and examples of holiness.

- ✝ What are some examples of outward religion without inward repentance where we are tempted to care more about appearances than about what God sees in the heart? Going to church just to look good, saying the right spiritual things without loving others, serving publicly while hiding sin privately, or caring more about reputation than true obedience.

- ✝ How can hypocrisy in believers become a stumbling block to others? When believers say one thing but live another way, it can confuse people, damage trust, and make others less willing to listen to the gospel.

- ✝ How does this passage both convict us and drive us to Christ? It convicts us by exposing our own hypocrisy and heart-level sin. It drives us to Christ by reminding us that only He can cleanse us and that He took the judgment we deserve.

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