

Kingdom Conflict

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[0 : 00] I wonder if you've ever had one of those situations where you think, who does this person think he is? How dare they say that? How can he possibly get away with it?

Well, as we come to our section in Luke's Gospel this morning, we might be tempted to think the same of Jesus. We might even think it's a bit confusing all that's going on.

I know that I did when I first opened it. Well, as I prepared for this this morning, it was really helpful listening back to what Graham said last week. And he helpfully reminded us that in this part of Luke's Gospel, we're in Jesus' school of discipleship.

We are following Jesus to the cross. That's our Gospel foundation for all that he says. And the big question is, what does it mean to follow this King?

We saw in the story of the Good Samaritan that there's an external part to following Jesus. Last week with Mary, Martha and prayer is an internal part to following Jesus. And our passage this evening ties together why Jesus is able to make these claims, make these demands on our lives.

[1 : 08] So if you have a Bible, please come with me to Luke chapter 11. If you've got one of the red pew Bibles, I believe it's page 1043. Let me read for us verses 14 to 28 of Luke chapter 11.

Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute, and the crowd were amazed.

But some of them said, by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons. Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined.

And a house divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul.

Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

[2 : 18] When a strong man fully armed guards his own house, his possessions are safe. When someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder.

Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. When an impious spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and finds none.

Then it says, I will return to the house I left. When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there.

And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.

He replied, blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it. I am a woeful writer.

[3 : 22] Everything I write, my wife Amy proofreads for me. Just last week, I was writing a new CV, an updated CV. And in the skills section, my wife Amy wrote, Craig has a specific skill to add on unnecessary words in sentences just to see if I would spot it.

And that struck me as it came here that Luke could not be any different. There is no wasted ink, no wasted words here. Have a look at this amazing description Luke gives of this amazing miracle in verse 14.

Luke couldn't be more succinct here on his description.

But look at verses 15 to 16. Nothing is said of the reaction of this man. Instead, it's all the reaction of those who witnessed it. People are amazed, they marvel, but they don't like what they see.

Some reject Jesus as being from Beelzebul, that is Satan. Others want more, just one more sign, one more sign from heaven. These people are skeptical of what they've seen. They don't doubt that miracles happened, but rather they are doubting how it was able to happen.

[4 : 37] Perhaps you're here this evening, this morning, sorry, or listening online, and you are skeptical also of Jesus. Let's see how Jesus answers these skeptics, and perhaps it may answer our questions also.

We don't know what the sign is that people are looking for, yet Jesus has enough confidence of what we see in verse 14 that it is enough to know who he is.

As I mentioned, Luke doesn't go into much detail about what Jesus does, but there's two things we can know from it. First off, that Jesus has power of the physical realm.

He has a physical man here with a physical issue and produces a physical solution. And secondly, in this verse, we see that Jesus has the power of the spiritual realm.

The reason why this man is mute is because he was possessed by a demon, and Jesus casts out the demon, and the demon comes out. Jesus has power over the physical realm and his power over the spiritual realm.

[5 : 46] Jesus has power over the heavens, and Jesus has power over the earth. He is this God of Genesis 1-1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Jesus is the cosmic king, and the cosmic king has come.

But more than that, in verses 17-23, we see the cosmic king has conquered. Some were seeking a sign in verse 16, and I think verse 17 is wonderful.

Jesus is knowing their thoughts. They want a sign, he's done a sign, he knows their thoughts, they get another sign for free. It's two for one, but it isn't enough for them. Look down at verse 17, how Jesus responds to this.

Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. It clearly shows Jesus' point, doesn't it?

It simply makes no sense for Satan's kingdom to be casting out another. It's divided. It will not stand. It's a formula for failure.

[6 : 55] By logic alone, it is ruled out. Jesus did not cast out this demon by the power of Satan. And you can imagine the crowd there going, okay Jesus, we get you. But if it wasn't that then, how did this happen?

Well, three things Jesus goes on to say to expand his point. Look at verses 18, 19, 20. See the if, if, if there at the start of the verses. Let's see how Jesus draws out his argument.

Verse 18. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul. How can the devil have a kingdom working against itself?

It won't stand. You can't say that it's a strong satanic force in the world and then say it's fighting against itself. That can't work. It doesn't make sense. So Jesus moves on in verse 19. Now, if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, so whom do your followers drive them out?

So then they will be your judges. Who are these followers Jesus is talking about? Or in ESV you might have, who are these sons that Jesus is talking about?

[8 : 07] If you turn back to chapter 10, verse 17, I think we have our answer, which says, the 72, that is the 72 that was sent out by Jesus, returned with joy and said, Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.

Jesus is saying, these disciples, these fellow heirs with Israel, if I cast up demons by the power of Satan, then so do they. And therefore the opposite, if they do it by another power, then so do I.

To reject them also means they will be your judges. Do you see what Jesus is doing to their arguments? They make a claim and Jesus draws out the conclusions. If you say this, if this, but if that, leaving us with a final if in verse 20, but if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Jesus takes their argument and says, no, it can't be that because that means this. It can't be that because that means this. Therefore, it's got to mean this. And look at his explanation in 21 to 22 of what's going on.

When a strong man fully armed guards his own house, his possessions are safe. When someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder.

[9 : 34] Jesus didn't cast out the demon of verse 14 by Satan, but by strength. Jesus pictures here a cosmic war between the power of the kingdom of the devil and the power of the kingdom of God.

And it's a cosmic war, but it is no struggle. For in these verses here, in this example Jesus gives, he shows us that in Jesus the king, the kingdom of God has come in presence and in power to plunder. I mean, this scene in verse 21 is formidable, isn't it? We've got this strong man. He's fully armed. He's in his own palace. He's on his home turf. He knows where every nook and cranny is. Then in comes the stronger man on the offense.

And he attacks him and he overcomes him. He takes away his armor in which he trusted and he divides his spoil. Satan has a strong grip in verse 21, but in comes the stronger man, the one for whom the gates of hell could not prevail.

And Jesus barges in and he overcomes for he is the cosmic king, the one with the ultimate power, the one with power over the physical realm and the spiritual realm. And with this victory come the spoils of war, distributed to those who fight with him.

[10 : 55] And what are these spoils Jesus has won for us? Well, I think it's everything that is wrapped up in salvation, forgiveness of sins, the coming of the spirit, his gifts, union with Christ, eternity with the king.

Jesus' work means that Satan is no longer in control and that's the point of these miracles. They are audiovisual testimony that Satan has ultimately lost.

That Christ is the one who reigns, that he is the one of power, that he is the king. The presence of the kingdom of God is seen not in good advice, but seen in power that overcomes evil.

Now how is this power that overcomes evil seen today? What we see in verses 21 to 22 is something that is literally true of those who are demon or are demon-possessed.

But it's also an image of every person that has ever lived who has ever come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians at the beginning of chapter 2, he speaks about how everyone who is not with Jesus is under the rule of Satan, the prince of power of the air to use Paul's language in Ephesians.

[12 : 15] So if verse 21 is true of everyone, how does Jesus break in and defeat Satan? I think it's Paul's letter to the Colossians really helps us here. From 1.13 he says, For he that is Jesus has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

And chapter 2 verses 13 to 15 he goes on to say, When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh God made you alive with Christ he forgave us all our sins having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness which stood against us and condemned us he has taken it away nailing it to the cross and having disarmed the powers and authorities he made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them by the cross.

What Paul speaks of in Colossians 2 is exactly what Jesus is doing in this journey on the way to Jerusalem. He is travelling to the cross to do these things for it's at the cross where Jesus stood toe to toe with Satan and won his great victory.

It's at the cross where we see the power of the gospel. It's at the cross where we hear of this crucified Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit comes to those who believe in him.

This is how we know the power of Jesus today. This is how we see the power of Jesus today. This is why Paul could say at the beginning of Romans in 1.16 for I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to all who believe first the Jew and then to the Gentile.

[13 : 56] The gospel is the power of God for salvation. The power of God where Jesus takes the house by force where he keeps it and he rules it and he reigns over what was rightly his.

So that means when we tell people about Jesus as we do evangelism we are infiltrating enemy lines in one sense. As the Holy Spirit uses the gospel message we share to break down the rule and reign of Satan in that person's life and set in throne to Christ there as a rightful king over what is rightfully his.

that means that small conversation you have with a friend about Jesus was anything but insignificant. That stumbling sharing of the gospel with a colleague with a neighbour was anything but weak.

That means that church's plan for some people to commit middle class social suicide and move to a housing scheme is anything but foolish. For the gospel is the power of God for salvation and the gates of hell will not prevail over it for Jesus has attacked he has overcome and he has conquered

Satan.

Now don't want to leave here thinking that Satan is a complete weakling because that's not true just read the start of Job. Just remember verses 21 here he is the strong man but the Lord Jesus Christ is the one who is even stronger he is the cosmic king and that's why Jesus draws this line in the sand the bottom line of this cosmic result one on the cross where Jesus is heading in our passage look at verse 23 whoever is not with me is against me and whoever does not gather with me scatters in a cosmic war there are no spectators as one commentator says in a cosmic war there is no Switzerland you are either for or against Jesus has shown us who he is and he says who do you say

[16:12] I am in response he leaves us no wiggle room no grey area and the point is clear do you stand with Jesus and help gather in those who also stand with him praying for his work making the most of the opportunities we have or do you go out and scatter and influence others not to come to him or to put more starkly are you with Jesus in the kingdom of light or of the devil in the kingdom of darkness there is no in between and Jesus calls us to make a decision the cosmic king has come the cosmic king has conquered and the cosmic king calls for a response Jesus draws this line at the end of verse 23 and then in verse 24 and 26 it's as if he peels back the scene giving us some sort of insight into the spiritual realm going on behind possibly explaining what's happened since verse 14 remember we don't know this man at the beginning has repented and believed in the Lord all we know is that he had a demon removed by him by the Lord Jesus Christ and in verse 24 we see that the spirit goes wandering seeking rest and it finds none so it returns home that is the body from which it was removed as the spirit returns it finds a man in good order morally upright life has been tidied up but still open to demons there's nothing protecting it no stronger force nothing has replaced it no protection from God to the Holy Spirit dwelling in that man this is a picture of a man who had a demon removed by God sorted his life out began to live an upright life but ultimately was not saved he had not acted on God's goodness towards him he had not received the Holy Spirit the spoils that came from

Jesus defeating the strong man and so he's left himself open to more demons and it's a tragic picture truly tragic picture and it's the most direct way of talking about the activity of demon possession but what can we learn from this we don't learn that everyone who's a Christian has the Holy Spirit dwelling within and everyone who isn't a Christian has a demon dwelling within them that's not true and that's neither the point of this text but I think we see a picture of someone who's trying to clean up their life trying to do better trying to live a moral life and perhaps may even have succeeded perhaps this person to many of us may look like a Christian but they aren't they may not be demon possessed but they aren't a spiritual vacuum either Christ is not dwelling in their hearts Satan still reigns over them they are not on the side of Jesus so that's how verses 27 to 28 fit in with this as Jesus was saying these things a woman in the crowd called out blessed is a mother who gave you birth and nursed you and he replied blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it this woman struck by what she's seen struck by what she's heard just blurts out this praise to Jesus the point of a blessing is not to eulogise Mary but instead Jesus and Jesus agrees with the blessing he says yes that's true but and he raises the bar up to a greater blessing he raises the bar up to a more specific particular blessing he says yes but blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it this is what it looks like to be on the side of Jesus to hear his word and keep it let's take a step back let's see how this fits in with what we've seen in Jesus' school of discipleship so far remember we are following Jesus on his way to Jerusalem

Jesus is off to bear the wrath of God for our sin off to transfer all those who will believe in him from the domain of darkness into his kingdom of light he is off to defeat the strong man and take his spoils this is our gospel indicative our gospel foundation for all that Jesus says in this passage in Luke's gospel and as he travels there to the cross to Jerusalem he is teaching what it looks like for us to follow him that is to hear his word and keep it and that's our gospel imperative our gospel actions built upon that gospel foundation think back to chapter 10 where we see that teaching about the Samaritan and the Mary and Martha and prayer three examples of following Jesus on his way to Jerusalem in story of the Samaritan obeying God's word looked like care for others external with Mary and Martha looked like obeying God's words looked like attention to Jesus internal and on prayer dependence to God obeying God's word praying to him as father again internal as we heard last week and in our passage

I think Jesus ties all this together obeying God's word looks like believing who Jesus is that he is the king of all the one who created the heavens and the earth so obey him to hear God's word and to not obey it is in the language of verses 21 and 22 like having Jesus the stronger man dwelling within us but at the same time hearing the whispers of Satan's strong man at the back door trying to sneak him in up the stairs into the spare room I think why would we do that?

Why would we try to welcome Satan back in? the strong man Satan and the demons they're homicidal they're out to destroy you trying to stop you from hearing God's word trying to stop you from obeying God's words and they will not stop coming back so to try to welcome them in to let them in to some small area of our life to go against the word of the cosmic king is a guess spiritually suicidal and for each of us trying to sneak Satan in the back door will look different perhaps things come to mind right now for you as you're aware of the temptation you face to go against the word of Jesus and instead go after the words of Satan I wonder what has your authority in your life in the way you spend your time in the way you use the internet in your giving in your spending in your relationships who is the ultimate authority yet in the face of this great challenge we find great comfort for not one

[23 : 34] Christian will face that daily battle alone for dwelling within the believers is the cosmic king himself one of the most wonderful passages I think in John 14 23 Jesus says anyone who loves me will obey my teaching and my father will love them and we will come to them and make our home in them the same Jesus who conquered the devil on the cross now dwells in all those who love him who keep his words which means that when we hear those whispers at the back door we are able to say no to the strong man because we have one dwelling within us who is far greater than he we have one dwelling within us who has transferred us from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of light we have the one dwelling within us who is the cosmic king who has come who has conquered and now today calls for a response let me pray our great God and Father rejoice that we can come to you in prayer not based on our sincerity but based upon our status in your son because of what he did on the cross

Lord Jesus we thank you and we praise you for the cross for the life that we now have in you and yet at the same time we are conscious of our sin of our shortcomings forgive us of our sin we ask show us in our lives where we are not following you and so in light of all that you have done on the cross bring us into your kingdom to a seat at your table to sit at your right hand help us therefore to live in light of who we are in you and as we think over what we've looked at this morning as we go to wherever you have called us in this world as we go to seek to tell others about you the great cosmic king may you help us to speak your gospel in confidence knowing that it is the gospel that saves not us help us not be ashamed of this glorious gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to all who believe so Jesus help us to live as you call us to be a people who are known by people who love you because they hear your words and they obey it we ask all these things for your glory Lord Jesus and for our joy in you Amen you you you you you you you you you you