

## ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM JESUS HEALS A MUTE MAN

Luke 11:14-28

Key Verse: 11:20

“But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.”

In the last passage, Jesus moved our hearts by teaching the Lord’s prayer to his disciples and to us. Jesus taught us to call God “Father.” Jesus gives us the privilege of coming to God as children to their Father. We do not deserve this privilege because of our sins. But Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead to purchase for us the privilege to call God “Father.” Prayer is not a burden. It is a sweet hour of communion with our heavenly Father. It is to receive his love in our hearts and to entrust our lives to him, to pledge our allegiance to him, and to rest in his providence and grace. In this relationship, we pray, “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.” May God help us to have the Lord’s Prayer always in our hearts.

The passage we will study today is about Jesus healing a mute man on the way to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, Jesus would suffer and die on the cross for the sin of the world. To advance toward Jerusalem, Jesus had to make a new decision moment by moment. Some of us tremble before a term paper deadline, or a bosses’ project deadline or a traffic court appointment. We can be so engrossed in our own struggle that we have no time or thought for anything else in our hearts. How much more Jesus could have been burdened, thinking of his upcoming death on the cross. But he took time to help one man who needed his mercy. Jesus is the God of compassion and the God of all comfort. He is our Savior. After healing this man, Jesus confronts the criticism of the Jewish religious leaders, who were raving mad. But Jesus speaks to them with gentle persuasion to turn their hearts back to God. May the compassion of Jesus fill our hearts as we study this passage.

First, Jesus heals a mute man (14).

Look at verse 14. “Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed.” Luke does not say where Jesus was or what happened to lead to this event. He simply says that Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. To Luke, the fact that Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute on the way to Jerusalem was beauty itself and truly glorious.

The word “mute” means “doesn’t make any sound.” This may be good for certain musical instruments when it is late at night. But it is not good for a man. God made man as a social being. God gave man two ears to hear well and one mouth to speak wisely at the proper time. Even though listening may be twice as important as talking, it is still absolutely necessary for man to speak. There is great power in speech. Lenin overturned centuries of Tsarist reign with three words, “Peace, Bread, Justice.” We remember the words of many great Americans long after their deaths. Patrick Henry said, “Give me liberty or give me death.” Franklin D. Roosevelt said, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Martin Luther King Jr. said, “I have a dream.” This mute man must have wanted to be a great man. But it was impossible. Perhaps he tried hard to succeed in school. But many of his teachers graded on class participation. Since he could not talk, he could not get credit. He may have dreamed to establish a house church with a beautiful woman of God. But he could not say anything to express his deep inner feelings. He could only stand by and watch as she was captivated by a handsome poet. This man had many things to say. But he could not utter a word, not a peep. He was a spectator, watching life pass him by day after day.

To this man, however, the problem ran much deeper than muteness. His muteness was caused by a demon. Demons are the agents of Satan who bring darkness and bitterness, sorrow and fear, hatred and all manner of evil. Though the demon was mute, it still had the power to oppress his soul in endless torment. He was in his own miserable world, confined with a demon, like a man in prison. And nobody really understood him. Nobody paid attention to him. Nobody cared for him.

However, one day, Jesus came where this man was. Though the man could say nothing, Jesus heard the silent anguish of his inner soul. Jesus knew his problem was caused by a mischievous demon. Everyone else had given up on this man long ago. But Jesus saw that if only the demon were driven out, this man would be a great man and a useful man. To Jesus, this man could be the President of the United States someday. Jesus wasted no time. He began

to drive out the demon from the man. At Jesus' word of command, the demon shivered and came out. The demon had no choice. Jesus drove him out by the power of God Almighty. This man was free from the darkness that had oppressed his soul. His face began to shine and his eyes twinkled like stars; even his tongue loosened and he began to speak. His first words were, "Thank you, Jesus." Then he said, "Mom, I love you, mom." As the people in the crowd heard this, they were amazed. They could feel the hope of God and the love of God and they could see the glory of God in Jesus. In fact, Jesus revealed that he is the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world. Isaiah prophesied that at the coming of the Messiah, "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy" (Isa 35:5,6). Jesus is the promised Messiah and his coming is good news of great joy for all mankind.

Second, the finger of God (15-23).

However, there were a few people in the crowd who began to sneer and then chatter among themselves cynically. They said, "By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons." And a few others wanted to test Jesus by asking for a sign from heaven. Luke does not say who they were. But Matthew and Mark identify them as the Pharisees and the teachers of the law from Jerusalem (Mt 12:24; Mk 3:22). They were the "official" religious leaders of Israel. They were basically political in nature. They were experts in putting a negative spin on the good deeds of their adversaries and a positive spin on their own evil doing. They called evil good and good evil. Though they were supposed to be the conscience of the nation, they lacked basic honesty and integrity which even the common people in the crowd possessed. To discredit Jesus' life-giving work of driving out a demon, they tried to say that Jesus was working with the power of demons.

It seems that these men did not have the courage to openly say what they were murmuring among themselves. But Jesus knew their thoughts. If Jesus were Clint Eastwood or John Wayne, he would stand right before them and say, "Do you have something to say?" But he did not. Knowing their thoughts, he began to appeal to them by means of reason and logic to show them the fallacy of their subjective slander. Jesus appealed to their consciences in the hope that they would repent their wicked thoughts. Jesus was humble enough to deal graciously with the snarling religious leaders.

Jesus said, "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall." Jesus began with a general statement. No kingdom has gotten stronger by division. No house has gained strength by division. President Abraham Lincoln quoted part of this verse in a campaign speech entitled, "A House Divided." His point was that America could not stand as a nation of half-slave and half-free states. He deeply understood the importance of the "United States." For this, he was willing go through the costly Civil War. We know that no family becomes stronger when father and mother fight each other and divorce. So there is a saying, "divide and conquer." If Satan has to resort to using his power to drive out his own workers, his kingdom has already fallen. Surely, all of his worker demons would go on strike for being treated like enemies when they were doing their best to serve him.

Jesus developed his logic systematically in verse 19. It says, "Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges." It seems that the Pharisees did not drive out demons. They only delivered lengthy speeches of words without power, like clouds without rain. But apparently, some of their followers did perform exorcisms. If the Pharisees did not accept at face value that it was God's power that drove out demons, their own position would be in danger. Their own followers would call them "Beelzebub" soon enough. Rebellion begets rebellion.

Jesus' logical and systematic reasoning exposed the religious leaders' slander and made their position untenable. But Jesus was not trying to win an argument. He wanted to win their souls over to God. Look at verse 20. "But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you." Here, the verb "has come" is the present perfect tense. If the religious leaders simply accepted that Jesus was the Messiah who drove out demons by the power of God, they could see the kingdom of God and enter the kingdom of God at that moment. Jesus really wanted them to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus is the God of compassion and grace, even toward the religious leaders.

Let's think about Jesus' words, "the finger of God" for a moment. What a beautiful and meaningful expression it is. It appears three other times in the Bible. The first time is in Exodus 8:19, when Pharaoh's magicians used the phrase, "the finger of God," to describe the power of God that they could not imitate. When God turned dust into

gnats, creating life from material, the Egyptian magicians could not duplicate it. So they said, “This is the finger of God.” With these words, they surrendered to the God of Moses. When Jesus said, “I drive out demons by the finger of God,” he wanted the religious leaders to humbly acknowledge God’s power and receive the kingdom of God.

The two other times the phrase “the finger of God” appears, it refers to God inscribing the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone (Ex 31:18; Dt 9:10). Thus, the finger of God wrote down the word of God. The word of God has the power to drive out demons. Jesus himself depended on the word of God to defeat the devil (Lk 4:4,8,12). The word of God has absolute power and authority. The word of God is the vehicle by which the kingdom of God comes. Jesus himself is the very Word of God. When we accept Jesus, we receive the kingdom of God.

The coming of the kingdom of God is not a matter of complex theological argument. It is a matter of God’s power triumphing over Satan’s power. St. Paul said, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.” Look at verses 21-22. “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.” The strong man is Satan. The stronger man is Jesus. Jesus can defeat Satan and establish the kingdom of God because he is stronger than Satan. 1 John 4:4b says, “...the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.” As the children’s song goes, “Greater is he that is in me; greater is he that is in me; greater is he that is in me, than he that is in the world.”

Finally Jesus said in verse 23: “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.” In the spiritual conflict between God and the devil, there is no middle ground. We must decide to stand with Jesus and gather with Jesus. Otherwise, we will join the devil’s work by default.

Third, blessed are those who obey God’s word (24-28)

In verses 24-26 Jesus explains something about the work of evil spirits to expose man’s vulnerability without him. In verse 24 Jesus talks about an evil spirit that comes out of a man. He does not say how it came out—whether Jesus drove it out or the Pharisees’ followers drove it out, or it just got bored and moved out one day. This is not important. What matters is that after moving out of a person, the evil spirit really wants to come back to the same person. When it arrives, it finds the house “swept clean and put in order.” This refers to the condition of a person who has disciplined himself with religious practices and his own morality. Such a person may look good for a while. But he cannot resist an evil spirit. Rather, he attracts an even greater number of evil spirits. And his final condition is much worse than the first.

The problem with the man in these verses is that his house is empty. It is swept clean and put in order, but it is empty. This person has not accepted Jesus as his king; his soul has not come under the protection of the kingdom of God. So it remains vulnerable. At any moment the devil may invade and occupy his soul. Here we learn that a person who looks good and seems to have his life in order is very vulnerable without Jesus. In fact, he is a candidate to be a thoroughly evil man.

Look at verses 27-28. “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.’” Here Jesus teaches us the way to be truly blessed. It is to hear the word of God and obey it. Probably the woman who called out to Jesus was really envious of Jesus’ mother and wished that she had a son like Jesus. She wanted to attribute a wonderful son to his mother’s labor pains and strenuous nursing effort. But Jesus turned her attention to the way of blessing for all people, no matter who they may be: It is to hear God’s word and obey it.

Jesus strongly urges that we fill our souls with the word of God so that there is no place for the devil to get a foothold. In the past, many saints memorized Revelation and recited it every morning as a warm up for Bible study. This is very good. But even if we cannot memorize Revelation and Genesis to Leviticus, we must have even one word of God in our hearts. We like St. Augustine. But he didn’t have many words of God; he had only two verses of the Bible, Romans 13:13,14. It says, “Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” When he held on to this word of God wholeheartedly, God raised him from an intellectual hedonist to a saint. They say that some time after his conversion, he happened to meet a female demon on the street with whom he had been formerly acquainted. She

greeted him from a distance with suggestive passion, “Augustine, it is I.” Then he turned and ran the other way, saying, “Yes, but it is not I.”

In this passage Luke emphasizes the compassion of Jesus even on the way to Jerusalem. Jesus took time to heal a mute man and revealed himself as the promised Messiah. When he was slandered by the religious leaders, Jesus patiently reasoned with them to help them accept him as the Messiah and enter the kingdom of God. Jesus is the God of compassion. Jesus drives out the power of demons and brings the kingdom of God to those who accept him. Praise Jesus!