

## THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND DEMONS

Matthew 12:22-37

Key Verse: 12:32

"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."

In the last passage we studied that Jesus defended his unlawful disciples who devastated several acres of grainfields by picking heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands and putting them in their mouths. We understand the young disciples' hungry stomachs and hungry feelings, which bothered them always. But even if the Old Testament law allowed them to pick heads of grain, the disciples' act of devastating a few acres of grainfields with their hands looks so funny and unlawful. The Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of working on the Sabbath by making others' grainfields haggard. But Jesus defended his disciples with the example of the priest Ahimelech and David, and also by the example of a sheep that falls into a pit on the Sabbath day--it would be taken hold of and lifted out even on the Sabbath day. There are two kinds of people: One kind is those who criticize and condemn; the other kind is those who defend the cause of those who make mistakes and free them from guilty consciences. Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..." This verse explains explicitly Jesus' shepherd heart. In today's passage Jesus explains to evil and adulterous people about the work of the Holy Spirit and about demons. Let's learn who are evil and adulterous people and how we can be faithful children of God.

First, a great and miraculous work of God (22-23). Let's read verse 22. "Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see." One day people brought to Jesus a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute. People believed that Jesus would heal him, even though he was a demon-possessed man who burdened others day and night. People wanted to give him a [job](#), but he was blind and mute. His physical strength might have been so great that he could lift even a [refrigerator](#) and throw it on the [concrete](#) ground. Then through his sense of smell he could find the food that fell out of the refrigerator and eat it. Sometimes he even might have eaten the pet dogs and cats of his neighbors. This might be a good illustration of the man possessed by demons, who was blind and mute. He seemed to have been born to be a troublemaker. He was the one who should not have existed in this world. People brought him to Jesus, not out of their compassion, but in the expectation that Jesus would heal him and get rid of the troubles he caused in their daily lives. This wretched man's fate was very sorrowful. Even though he was blind, he must have had sockets for eyes. So he must have cried a lot over his sorrowful situation. People had given him sympathy and empathy and all possible help, but they could not do any more. One day they heard that Jesus of Nazareth was coming to town. And they shouted, "Yeah! That's it!" And ten of the strong young men grabbed this blind-mute man and came to Jesus with him. Matthew says, "Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see" (22). Here we learn two things about Jesus. First, Jesus is the compassionate God. Even though the man came to Jesus not properly dressed up, Jesus didn't mind. He healed

the man so that he could talk and see. Second, Jesus is the God of hope. This man was a man of no hope, but he could have hope in Jesus. He became a man of five senses. He could be a hard worker and go to school and do homework. And if he did his undergraduate work well, he could go on to a Ph.D. program and get a Ph.D. After getting a Ph.D. he could marry a pretty and decent girl and have his own family.

There was no hope for him without Jesus, as there is no hope for us without Jesus. But there is hope in Jesus. Whether we are born in a good family or a poor family, we each must work hard. Yet no one gets rewarded as much as he works. We have hope in Jesus because Jesus is the Son of God who saves us from our sins. What was people's response? Verse 23 says, "All the people were astonished and said, Could this be the Son of David?" They were waiting for the Messiah. They found the Messiah's work in Jesus and they were astonished. There are many surprises in our lives. I hope that we all can be astonished by Jesus' messianic ministry.

Second, the unhappy Pharisees (24). Look at verse 24. "But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." They saw with their eyes that Jesus healed a demon-possessed and blind and mute man. So they should have rejoiced as the people chosen by God to shepherd his people. But they criticized Jesus, saying, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." As we know, demons do not have sympathy, empathy, humanity or integrity. They exist to ruin people and finally lead people to destruction. For example, there was a young man who was so handsome and the envy of all the girls in his town. But demons began to penetrate into his soul one by one, ten by ten, fifty by fifty, one hundred by one hundred, until he was possessed by 6,000 demons. Not only did the town's girls cry a lot because of his demon-possessed state, he tortured himself with sharp stones and yelled at Jesus, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" He was only one man, but he said, "We are many" (Mk 5:7-9). He was not himself, but he was aggravated to speak as one of the demons. Not only in this story, but in the whole Bible we find demons. They are the same as evil spirits, the devil and Satan. Satan seems to be the highest ranking and the devil seems to be next. The evil spirit or unclean spirit seems to be next. And demons seem to be the foot soldiers of the power of the dark world. Therefore, the Pharisees' criticism that Jesus worked with the chief demon's power is contradictory. It is ridiculous because demons are all fighting on the same side.

They criticized Jesus that he worked with Beelzebub, the prince of demons. It was because their pride was hurt. When they preached every Sunday in the synagogue, all the members dozed and some snored and many of them left many times. So the worship service was very unspiritual and the congregation was not responding to the message of the speaker. But Jesus healed the demon-possessed man when the Pharisees could not but remain powerless. They criticized Jesus' messianic ministry in order to undermine Jesus, so that all the people would come back to their synagogue meetings. Precisely speaking, their intention of slandering Jesus was a political power struggle. In the past, the Pharisees possessed all the members in their congregation. But now all the people went to Jesus, like people beside themselves. But the people

were not beside themselves. The Pharisees were beside themselves out of their jealousy. The Pharisees thought that if the people all went to Jesus, they would lose the people, and next they would lose their income from the synagogue, so they would not get any pay. Moreover, their power and authority would disappear when they lost people to Jesus. In other words, Jesus won and they lost. Their way of thinking was very political. When we study politics throughout history, it is like a sports game. There is a winner and loser. In America, there is a presidential election every four years. According to the number of votes, one becomes President and the other becomes the loser and his name disappears from the newspapers. Modern times have developed mostly democratic societies. But in the past, throughout long human history, if anybody became a king, he killed the former king's subjects, relatives and children mercilessly. This was repeated for so many generations until the Magna Charta was passed in England (1215). At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees were in power. So they were ready to destroy anybody else who was gaining power. Therefore, their criticism seemed to be ridiculous. But, in fact, it was indeed murderous.

Third, Jesus wanted to persuade the Pharisees (25-29). Jesus came to this world to save men from their sins. Jesus was with God. And Jesus created the world with God and the Holy Spirit (Jn 1:1,2). The world was void and confused. Then Jesus, who is God, created man and the world in perfect harmony and order. But he gave up the power and glory of the kingdom of God and came to this world. He was born in the stable of an animal and laid in a manger. His coming was promised, prophesied and fulfilled (Ge 3:15, 2Sa 7:12). This Messiah, who is the Creator God, had no reason to borrow the power of Beelzebub. So Jesus began to explain that every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? (25-26). Simply speaking, Jesus is saying that he was driving out demons, healing the sick and preaching the gospel not with the power of Beelzebub, but with the power of God. Look at verse 28. "But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." Here Jesus was inviting them by saying, "I am doing all these things by the Spirit of God." And whoever believes in him will see the kingdom of God and enter the kingdom of God (28). But they didn't respond. So Jesus explained again that he has almighty power. Therefore, nobody can rob his kingdom (29). This was another rebuke to the Pharisees and an invitation to the kingdom of God.

Fourth, anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven (30-32). So far Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute. Jesus also appealed to the Pharisees that he is the promised Messiah who does the work of God with the power of God. But the Pharisees' response was very cold. Jesus did not despair. He said in verse 30, "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters." This was another declaration that he is the promised Messiah and it is an invitation to come to the Father through him.

But there were so many who spoke against the work of the Holy Spirit, to save their own skins. Jesus clearly told them in verse 32, "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." To speak against the Holy Spirit is

serious matter, but it is very easy for people to do because we are all experts of criticism and complaint and our culture is based on criticism and complaint. One guy bitterly complained that his teacher did not give him an "A" on his pre-calculus exam, even though he could not answer three questions out of five. He thought that he was worthy of getting an "A," because he attended all his classes. Some people complain about everything. But if we have no eyes to see the work of God, and criticize the work of the Holy Spirit, it is indeed unforgivable. Such people's destiny is where the fiery lake of burning sulfur is furiously burning (Rev 21:8). When we think about the last part of the 20th century, American culture is largely based on evolution and human freedom. People do not know that human beings are sinful, even though they are good, too. People claim human freedom endlessly. But most of them do not develop the good side of humanity; they enjoy sinful human freedom. Twenty-two years ago a servant of God came to America and heard that a girl, before marriage, engaged in immorality. Then the servant of God fainted, wondering how this could happen in this great America. The next day he went to Great America and enjoyed the roller coaster and he could overcome culture shock. Human freedom is good. But when we use it, not in divine discipline, but directed by the sinful human nature, we are headed toward destruction. These days an upright person is known as a strange person. And those who want to keep gospel faith are known as cult members. But Jesus was called a leader of the Nazarene sect. Christians in the Roman Empire were known as rebels against the Roman Emperor. Throughout history true Christians are always the absolute minority. But Jesus is like sunshine and we Christians are like torches of the gospel and Christian influence still maintains the world.

There is a church which emphasizes gospel faith and campus evangelism. Many bad people have been cared for and raised as good students. Furthermore, many Ph.D.'s have been raised through this gospel ministry. There was a teacher at a girl's high school. He could have done great things in the world. But he was so sensitive to women. Finally he lost all his strength and dropped out of the Ph.D. program. He came to Chicago UBF and a servant of God took care of him for 10 years. He became a Ph.D., and now is a professor at a state university. What a wonderful work of God. But many evil people whose churches or organizations are dwindling criticize this gospel-centered church, saying that they are "brainwashing" people through Bible teaching so that they cannot continue to live sinful lives. Many think that criticizing God's work is normal because this culture is based on evolution and human freedom. Let's read verse 32. "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." Therefore, we must honor the work of the Holy Spirit and rejoice in the work of the Holy Spirit and bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. How can we distinguish between good people and bad people? We can distinguish them by their fruit. Bad people are like big trees with only leaves. But good people are like trees that bear many good fruits. Evil words and deeds come from an evil heart. Encouraging and life-giving words come from a good heart. We can have a good heart when we repent and believe in Jesus. Those who have no fruit of faith or fruit of repentance are evil people. On the other hand, those who have the fruit of faith and the fruit of repentance are good people (33-37).

Today we thought about the root of the Pharisees' sin. We also learned that God's servants must see everything from God's point of view.