

The Finger of God
Luke 11:14–26

Introduction

Please turn to Luke 11:14–26 and follow along as I read our text for this morning. ¹⁴ *And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute; when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed.* ¹⁵ *But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.”* ¹⁶ *Others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven.* ¹⁷ *But He knew their thoughts and said to them, “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls.* ¹⁸ *“If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul.* ¹⁹ *“And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges.* ²⁰ *“But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.* ²¹ *“When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed.* ²² *“But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder.* ²³ *“He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.* ²⁴ *“When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’* ²⁵ *“And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order.* ²⁶ *“Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.”*

Luke introduces this event simply as occurring when Jesus was casting out a demon. It takes place after Jesus taught His disciples about prayer, but Luke does not indicate how long after. His inclusion of it here does reinforce the confidence we can have in prayer. Demons are frightening to humans because they are supernatural beings, but God grants us the gift of the Holy Spirit who is greater (1 John 4:4). We can call on our heavenly Father to protect us and He will. As Jesus puts it in verse 20, God casts demons out by His finger. It is insignificant work to Him. Demons are more powerful than us, but all we need to do is *Submit to God and resist the devil and he will flee from us* (James 4:70).

This narrative is not to be confused with other similar but different events. Liberal scholars seem to have a hard time believing that Jesus taught the same lesson more than once so they try to blend similar Gospel accounts together. Yet anyone who teaches much will teach the same lesson many times. Every parent does that with their children, and every teacher does that with their students, how much more so a traveling teacher in similar circumstances. The similar event recorded in Matthew 12 and Mark 3 occurred in Capernaum perhaps a year earlier, and the man in those accounts was also blind. Luke, a physician by trade, would not have overlooked that fact.

Opposition to Jesus - Luke 11:14-16

Their False Accusation - Luke 11:14-15

The opposition rises against Jesus as a result of Him casting out a demon. The text is clear that the demon was mute and it caused the man to be mute. Next week I will spend more time talking about what demons can and cannot do, but I must point out here that we should not restrict such physical displays of demonic oppression to just ancient times or third world countries. There is plenty of demonic activity in our own nation. 2 Corinthians 2:11 and Ephesians 6:11 both describe the devil as scheming, so demons may change their strategies in their efforts to influence the people in any particular culture, but their abilities have not changed. There are many different medical and psychological reasons that may result in a person being unable to speak, but another possibility is demonic oppression.

As soon as Jesus casts the demon out, the man is able to speak and it amazes the crowd - qaumavzw / thaumadzō - they marvel, are astonished. By this point in Jesus' ministry He has already cast out many demons including those that caused the person to be mute (Matthew 9:32-33; Matthew 12:22; Mark 7:25), so it is probable that those in the crowd had heard about Jesus' abilities before, but the people were still astonished when they actually saw it done.

As had happened before, there were those in the crowd that were opposed to Jesus and they accuse Him saying, "*He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of demons.*" Luke does not identify the accusers other than "*some*" in the crowd, but the other times this slander was made it was the Pharisees (Matthew 9:34; 12:24 & Mark 3:22). The Pharisees had mixed motives. They were jealous because the crowds were reacting so favorably toward Jesus. They also were following the logic of their very bad theology. They had already concluded Jesus could not be from God because He broke their traditions by healing on the Sabbath and they were seeking ways to destroy Him (Matthew 12:9-14).

Luke does not say who, but this opposition fits that of the Pharisees. However, it could also have been others who were just following their example and repeating their accusation. It could also have been the ludicrous conclusion of those who fain piety but have evil hearts. Such people are still around today and cause havoc among God's people. Tares exist among the wheat (Matthew 13:24-26). Luke does not mention motives, but whatever they may have been specifically, they were evil.

They could not deny the obvious that Jesus had cast out the demon and healed the man, so their effort is to disparage Jesus with the claim He did it under the authority of Satan. Beelzebul is one of the names the Jews sometimes used for Satan. Its origin is not clear, but it appears to be a corruption of the name of a Canaanite deity and understood by the Jews in terms of a similar sounding Hebrew word meaning, "*Lord of the dung,*" or "*Lord of the flies,*" and assigned the position of being the ruler of demons. It is clear from Jesus' answer that He understood them to mean this.

This was a very poor assertion to make against Jesus. It was made even weaker by the fact that it appears Jesus responded without hearing what they had said. Verse 17 states, "*But He knew their thoughts.*" Apparently they were speaking among themselves or muttering in the crowd, but Jesus called them to account and demonstrated to them and the crowd that their accusation was invalid for it was illogical, inconsistent, insurrectionary and inane.

Their Demand - Luke 11:16

Before Luke reports Jesus' defense, he points out there were others present opposing Jesus. They were demanding that Jesus perform a sign (shmei:on / sēmeion) from heaven, a miracle of some type that would prove He was from God. Their hearts were hard and it blinded them to the miracle Jesus had just done. For two years Jesus had openly been healing every manner of disease and sickness. He had demonstrated His power over nature including stilling the wind and waves with a simple command. Jesus had shown His authority over the supernatural by casting out many, many demons. He even raised the dead. But that was not enough. They wanted a sign from heaven.

Possibly that meant they wanted Him to do something on a cosmic level scale such as had been prophesied in Joel 2:31 that "*The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.*" Perhaps they wanted the Lord to speak from the heavens with thunder, lightning, hail and trumpets as occurred on Mount Sinai or as described in the Psalms. God had already spoken from heaven in approval of Jesus at both His baptism and transfiguration, but they were not there, so that did not matter to them. What Jesus had just done was more than enough of a sign miracle, but they refused to believe unless God did things according their own demand, and even then, it is doubtful they would believe.

That is the nature of those who have hard hearts and why people will not believe unless the Holy Spirit intervenes. Paul describes the unbelieving in 2 Corinthians 4:4 as having minds that are blinded by the devil. They could not deny the miracle Jesus did in front of them, but they could not recognize its

significance. It is not that people today cannot see God's hand around them for His work is obvious. It is that they suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18), and in following their own desires they deliberately overlook the obvious evidence (2 Peter 3:5).

Jesus will address these people and their demands, but first He defends the nature of what He has done in casting out the demon by demonstrating the illogic, inconsistency, insurrection and inanity of their accusation.

Jesus' Defense - Luke 11:17-23

Their Illogic - Luke 11:17-18. Jesus begins by pointing out that their claim is illogical. While Satan is the father of hatred and lies with the consequences of such evil having an effect on his rule including disorder, chaos, confusion and inconsistency, Satan is also very intelligent. He is evil, but he is not stupid, and even he knows that his kingdom cannot stand if he fights against himself.

Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), and in so doing he may restrict a demon's power over a possessed person in order to give the illusion of a cleansing. This kind of false exorcism has occurred throughout history and is practiced even today by various cults and false healers. Also, in the confusion and rebellion that by nature arises out of evil, there may be demons that act on occasion inconsistently and in conflict with him and each other, but Satan does not cast out Satan and he is not divided against himself. That would be absurd and the devil is not stupid.

Their Inconsistency - Luke 11:19. Jesus next points out that they are inconsistent in the application of their accusation.

The reference to "*sons*" in verse 19 refers to those who were their disciples or followers. "*Son*" was often used in such a manner as in the common Old Testament expression "*sons of the prophets*" (2 Kings 2:3; etc.). One example of such Jewish exorcists occurs in Acts 19. The Pharisees were inconsistent in rejecting Jesus but accepting the casting out of demons by their followers as the work of God. That is why Jesus says that their "*sons*," their followers, who have cast out demons would be their judges.

If those "*sons*" agreed with the Pharisees and Scribes that Jesus was casting out demons by Beelzebul, then they were in fact doing the same. A condemnation of themselves and their teachers since they had given approval. If they agreed with Jesus that it was the work of God, then they condemned their teachers' accusations as false. Either way, Jesus' opponents were put to shame because of their inconsistency.

Their Insurrection - Luke 11:20. Jesus third defense was pointing out their insurrection against God. Verse 20 is a conditional clause of reality and could be translated, "*if I cast out demons by the finger of God, and I do, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.*" Their accusation, like that of the Scribes and Pharisees earlier, was in direct opposition to what was actually taking place. It was in fact an insurrection against God. They were in rebellion against Him by claiming that the work of God was the work of Satan which is an extremely serious accusation.

There should have been no question whatsoever about the source of Jesus' power. They had personally observed or certainly would have been told about Jesus' teaching and miracles. Jesus proclaimed the truth and refuted lies. His many miracles of healing, raising the dead and casting out demons were in direct opposition to sin and Satan and in fulfillment of many prophecies concerning the Messiah. Jesus even had the authority to forgive sin. All that Jesus ever did or said demonstrated He was from God and against sin and Satan. Yet these people were so filled with envy and hatred that they attributed all that Jesus did to Satan instead of God. Their accusations against Jesus were the statements of insurrection against God.

Their Inanity - Luke 11:21-22. Jesus final defense was to show that their accusation was inane, stupid, if you will. The analogy Jesus gives in verses 21-22 is simple. You cannot rob someone's home when they are still armed to stop you. You must first overpower them and take away their ability to protect their possessions, then you can carry it all off as plunder. Jesus has shown by this case of the demonized man that He overpowered Satan while Satan was still armed and carried off what had formerly belonged to him. It was inane to argue that Jesus was subject to Satan and cast a demon out by Satan's power when that very action proved He had overpowered Satan and took what had belonged to Satan.

Jesus' Warning - Luke 11:23

Their accusation against Jesus was illogical, inconsistent, insurrectionary, and inane. Their slander of Jesus proved that they were in rebellion against God.

Jesus warning in verse 23 was a definitive statement about those who were blaspheming Him, but it was also a warning to the people. No one is in a neutral position with Jesus. You are either with Him or against Him. You are either helping Him or working against Him. There is no neutral ground for there are only two kingdoms. You are either in God's kingdom and He is your master, or you are in Satan's kingdom and he is your master. Claiming you are your own master only demonstrates your ignorance of Satan.

As Paul states in Romans 6:16, *"Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?"* Every person who is not a follower of Jesus Christ is, as stated in Ephesians 2:1-3, *"... dead in trespasses and sin... [walking] according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience... and [are] by nature children of wrath."*

Neutrality is not an option. Tolerance is not enough. Are with Jesus or against Him?

The Danger - Luke 11:24-26

Jesus gives further warning of the danger they faced in verses 24-26. I will talk more next week about some of the things we learn about demons in this passage, but this morning I want to stress the danger of moral reformation without spiritual rebirth. Jesus had mentioned about their sons casting out demons, but the departure of a demon does not mean you are now safe unless a new master takes up residence. That again stresses the importance and goodness of God in giving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In this story a demon, an unclean spirit, goes out of man for whatever reason. It does not find the rest it was looking for, so it decides to go back to that same man, described here as *"my house from which I came."* When the demon returns, he finds the man in good order, so it gets seven other demons who are more evil and then all eight inhabit the man making him much worse off than before.

There are many ways in which such a man could be worse off with so many demons within. He would be worse off if they changed him into someone overtly evil, heavily involved in the occult and perhaps even openly Satanic. That would be a terrible state, and there are plenty of cases of people that got their lives straightened out for a while by one means or another, and then plummeted into the depths of depravity. However, given Jesus emphasis that this man had been *"swept and put in order,"* I think an equally terrible possible state would be religious but under demonic deception. There are multiple warnings throughout the New Testament about the doctrines of demons and religious reformations that appears to be wise, but are far from God. How terrible to live a life of outward personal piety, yet but in reality be excluded from God. This describes not only false religions and cults, but also those Jesus warned about in Matthew 7. They do all sorts of things in His name, but Lord will declare to them, *"I never knew you; depart from me, you who practices lawlessness."*

We are again compelled to praise God for the gift of the Holy Spirit given to those who ask, because without Him, there would be no hope for the present or eternity. Every human would remain by nature children of wrath walking in one way or another “*according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience*” (Ephesians 2:1-3).

Recognizing the Finger of God

I want to conclude this morning by reflecting on the solution to the problem encountered in this passage. Jesus did a miracle in front of them, but they falsely accused Him because they failed to recognize that what He did was by the “*finger of God.*” I have found that even believers stumble into this same trap because they do not recognize God at work in and around them. I thought of four major reasons why people fail to recognize the “*finger of God*” at work including: 1) Simply not looking for it. 2) False expectations. 3) Spiritual deception. 4) Spiritual myopia - short sighted.

1 & 2) Not Looking and False Expectations. God’s hand can be seen at work everywhere, but you must learn to look for it and recognize it. In a context of addressing conflict and selfishness among his readers, James 4:2-3 states “*You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*” I could paraphrase that in seeing the finger of God at work as, *You do not see because you do not look. You look and do not see because you look with wrong motives to see what you want.*

Many people have told me that they do not see God at work. That occurs most often when they or someone close to them is going through some trial. It is hard to describe the lilies on the shore when you are drowning in the middle of the lake, but the lilies are still there and the driftwood that will keep you afloat is already nearby. It helps to have those things pointed out. While you should not doubt or accuse God, it is good to ask others what they see God doing and so be encouraged when you cannot see it for yourself.

Related to this, you should give open praise to God as you see His hand at work. Not only does God deserve such praise, but it also helps both you and others to be more aware of God’s work. It trains you and others to look and see God’s work in the present. Count your blessings.

The second part of this failure is having wrong expectations. You are drowning and God provides you driftwood to hang on to until you either make it to shore or a boat comes along, but your expectation is a helicopter and rescue jumper. Since what God did does not match your expectations, you ignore it and fail to recognize God at work, or even worse, you begin to doubt God and may even make false accusations against Him.

God is good, and nothing that happens in your life no matter how difficult or tragic will ever change that fact. Sadly, I have seen many professing Christians turn away from God instead of running to Him when they are going through times of distress. They do not see His goodness because they are not looking for it, and they cannot see it when it is right in front of them because it does not meet their expectations. This brings up a third reason people do not see God at work. I call it spiritual myopia.

3) Spiritual Myopia. Myopia is the medical term for being near-sighted. I have that so I need glasses in order to see clearly things that are distant. Spiritual myopia is the condition of only being able to see the immediate present. It is an inability to connect the events of the past to see that God is the one that has directed your steps to the present (Proverbs 16:9) coupled with a weak faith that does not trust God for the future. Those with spiritual myopia do well when their circumstances are good, but when things become difficult, they begin to doubt and may even start making false accusations against God.

My physical myopia is caused by the lenses in my eyes having an incorrect shape which distorts the images I see at a distance. The two major causes of spiritual myopia are ignorance and pride. Ignorance

keeps you from seeing God and His work clearly because you do not know what He is like or what to look for. Pride demands that God does things the way you want. Usually it is a combination of the two. The solution is to humble yourself and learn who God is and what He is like from His revelation of Himself in the Scriptures.

Remember, according to both Romans 5:3-5 and James 1:2-4, God is at work in your life even in the midst of tribulation and trials, and He will use even those things to make you mature and mold you into the image of Christ, which is the purpose of your salvation. Look to the past to see God's good hand in bringing you to the present. Understand the Scriptures and hold to its promises that God will continue to have His hand upon you in the future, for "*He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 1:6).

4) Deception. A fourth reason people do not see the *Finger of God* at work is deception. People are led astray by the doctrine of demons, false teachers and self-deception. All of them present a false view of God and His work usually resulting in false accusations against Him.

I have already talked about self-deception because it is simply justifying what you want to believe. It gives the excuses for your wrong expectations of God and feeds the self-righteousness of blaming God when those expectations are not met.

Demonic deception is part of all false religions and cults and occurs within Christianity when the doctrines of demons twist or replace the revelation of God. Paul gives explicit warning of this in 1 Timothy 4:1-3.

Jesus (Matthew 7:15f), Peter (2 Peter 2), Paul (2 Timothy 3), John (1 John 2:18) and Jude (Jude 18) all warn about the danger of false teachers. Their smooth and flattering speech deceives the hearts of the unsuspecting (Romans 16:18) and though they are wicked, they disguise themselves as servants of righteousness just as Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Conclusion

Jesus did mighty miracles in front of the people, but the unbelieving could not see the finger of God at work because Jesus did not meet their expectations. They were blinded by their own ignorance and religious teachings that were contrary to the Scriptures. Their pride would not let them back down, so they falsely accused Jesus to justify themselves and their position.

Nothing has changed. The finger of God is constantly at work intervening in the lives of believers and unbelievers alike, but people do not see it because they do not look, and when they do look, they cannot recognize it because they are blinded their own ignorance, wrong expectations, spiritual myopia or the deception of demons, false teachers and their own pride.

The solution to seeing God at work is simple. Humble yourself before Him. Learn what God has revealed about Himself and His will in the Scriptures. Look to see what God has done in the past and is doing in the present asking others to help you recognize what you don't currently see, then praise Him for it. Step out in faith to trust Him in the present and the future because the Lord is good and He keeps His promises. You can then see the finger of God at work.

Sermon Notes - 1/15/2017
THE FINGER OF GOD - Luke 11:14-26

Introduction

Luke does not say when this occurred, but its placement in the text reinforces being confident in _____

This is not the _____ event as similar events in which Jesus was falsely accused and He corrected them

Opposition to Jesus - Luke 11:14-16

Their False Accusation - Luke 11:14-15. Opposition arose when Jesus _____ a mute demon

Demons still possess the ability to cause _____ problems for people they oppress

As on previous occasions, some _____ Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of demons

The accusation fits the _____, but it could have been their followers or some with evil and blinded hearts

The motives and action are evil in trying to _____ Jesus with the claim He worked under Satan's power

Jesus "*knew their thoughts*" and confronted them - apparently without _____ what they had said

Their Demand - Luke 11:16. Additional opposition arose from those demanding a _____ from heaven

Their hearts were hard and they were _____ to what Jesus had just done and had been doing for two years

Perhaps they wanted sign on a _____ such as on Mt. Sinai or the fulfillment of Joel 2:31

The Holy Spirit _____ intervene because people are blinded by the devil - 2 Corinthians 4:4

God's work is _____, but people suppress the truth (Romans 1:18) & deliberately overlook it (2 Peter 3:5)

Jesus' Defense - Luke 11:17-23

Their Illogic - Luke 11:17-18

Evil results in disorder, chaos, confusion and inconsistency, but Satan is intelligent & does not fight _____

Satan can come as an angel of light and may restrict a demon's activity to give the _____ of a cleansing

Their Inconsistency - Luke 11:19

"_____ " refers to their disciples who had also cast out demons

It is inconsistent to accept their _____ as casting out demons by God and accuse Jesus of doing it by Satan

Their Insurrection - Luke 11:20. A conditional sentence of _____ - this is what Jesus was doing

Their accusation was in direct opposition to what God was doing - it was _____

Jesus' teaching & many miracles made it obvious that He fulfilling Messianic prophecies and _____ Satan

Their Inanity - Luke 11:21-22

Jesus' analogy is simple: You cannot rob someone prepared to prevent it. You _____ them first

Jesus' casting out of the demon showed He had overpowered _____. It was stupid to claim the opposite

Jesus' Warning - Luke 11:23 - a definitive statement about those _____ Jesus and a warning to the people

There is _____ position. You are either with or against Jesus, working for Him or against Him

If you are not following and obeying _____, you are following and obeying Satan - Rom. 6:16f; Eph. 2:1-3

The Danger - Luke 11:24-26

The departure of a demon does not mean you are _____ unless the Holy Spirit takes up residence

A worse condition could be overt evil or religious _____ with demonic deception

Apart from the _____, every human remains under the power of Satan - Ephesians 2:1-3

Recognizing the Finger of God

It was obvious that Jesus' miracle was done by "*finger of God.*" People still ____ to recognize God at work

1 & 2) Not Looking and False Expectations - James 4:2-3

It can be _____ to recognizing what God is doing when you are in the midst of tribulation

You can find _____ by asking others what they see God doing and then praise Him for it

People fail to recognize God at work when they _____ He does things the way they want

No circumstance you experience can change the fact that God is _____ - but you must look to see it His way

3) Spiritual Myopia - near sighted focus on the _____, ignorant of the past, without hope for the future

Two major causes of spiritual myopia: 1) _____ of God & His will. 2) _____ making demands on God

God uses tribulation and trials to make you _____ - more like Jesus (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; Phil. 1:6)

4) Deception - people are led _____ so that they fail to see God and work or interpret it wrongly

Self-deception enables justification of what you want to believe, gives _____ and feeds self-righteousness

Demonic deception is part of all false religions & cults, and doctrines that _____ or replace God's Word

False teachers deceive the unsuspecting with smooth & flattering speech, _____ themselves as righteous

Conclusion

The unbelieving opposed Jesus because they could not recognize the _____ finger of God at work

People still fail because they don't look or are _____ by ignorance, wrong expectations, myopia, deception

To see God at work: Be _____, learn of God & His will, ask others to point it out, praise Him, walk in faith

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help. **Young Children** - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch.

Older Children - Do one or more of the following: 1) Count how many times the word "Jesus" is mentioned. 2) Discuss with your parents how you have seen God at work and how to improve your ability to see that.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. How does Luke 11:14-26 reinforce Jesus' lesson on prayer that precedes it? How does Jesus' miracle in Luke 11:14-26 differ from similar accounts? Why would some people accuse Jesus of casting out the demon by Beelzebul? Why was this accusation illogical, inconsistent, a demonstration of insurrection, and inane? What is Jesus' warning in Luke 11:23? Why does He give this warning here? What is the point of Jesus story in Luke 11:24-26? In what possible ways could this man's condition have been made worse by the multiple demons? What are some reasons that people still fail to recognize the *finger of God* at work? Why don't people look for it? What are some false expectations that would keep them from seeing it? What is spiritual myopia? How can seeing God's work in the past help to see it in the present? How can seeing God's work in the past and present give hope for the future? What is the nature and danger of each of the following sources of deception: Self, demonic, false teachers? What can you do to improve your ability to see the *finger of God* at work in the present?