

## **The Strong Man**

Luke 11:14-23 (11-03-19)

Ernie Godshall  
Faith Bible Church  
Evansville, IN

I love history. I especially love historical accounts in which the good guys smash the bad guys and save civilization. That's pretty much what happened on September 11, 1683, when the Ottoman Turks under the command of the grand vizier Mustafa were attacking the walled city of Vienna, capital of Eastern Europe at the time. The future of Europe lay in the balance – Christian or Muslim. Things were looking bleak for the Europeans until King John Sobieski showed up with his Polish Hussars and with about 20,000 Poles, Germans, and Austrians led the greatest cavalry charge in history. Down the Kahlenberg hill they galloped into the enemy camp with devastating blows and sent the Turks back to Turkey, saving Europe from perhaps becoming a Muslim Caliphate.

But there is coming a far greater Cavalry Charge led by a far greater King, King Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and you and I as believers will ride with Him on white horses as He returns to earth, destroys the devil and his diabolical forces, and sets up His glorious kingdom. But more of this later.

Turn to an amazing passage in Luke 11:14-23 that captures this great cosmic battle between Jesus and the devil. Today the world lies in the lap of the evil one. Satan rules in every unbeliever's heart as the usurper, but not in believers' hearts. As a believer in Jesus Christ, you've been transferred out of the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. You are more than conquerors. Satan is your adversary and wants to deceive you, trick you, and trip you up. He has wiles and strategies to derail you and tempt you to deny your Lord. But you have power to resist him by being strong in the faith. You fight the devil just like Jesus did in the wilderness with the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit: "Thus says the Lord." Let's look at Luke's fascinating passage leading up to the call of unconditional surrender.

### **An irrefutable display of Christ's superior power – vs. 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.*

Christ has cast out thousands of demons, healed people, raised people from the dead, walked on water, changed water to wine, and fed thousands during His public ministry. All these works of power demonstrated and proved that He was the Messiah. But this work of power is here to show that Christ has superior power over Satan's agents. He cast out the demon. The mute man spoke. And the crowds were amazed. Three simple happenings, but so very powerful.

Christ can do for sinners what no one or nothing in the world can do: no other religion, no philosophy, no psychology, no cognitive therapy, or no expert human behaviorist. Christ has superior power! He gives you a new heart, forgives your sin, brings you to the Father, and puts His Holy Spirit in you. He empowers you to love God and others, to put off fleshly habits and put on the beautiful fruit of the Spirit, to reconcile enemies, to redeem marriages. All of these things are all for the glory of God. Christ has superior powers for sinners that absolutely no one else has. Here He made a mute man speak.

### **The world's irrational response to who Christ really is – vs. 14b-16.**

*14b 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.*

Comparing Matthew, Mark, and Luke's accounts lets us know there are three groups present when Christ made a mute man speak: the masses, the Jewish religionists, and the Pharisees and scribes. They were all present here and each responded to Jesus powerful miracle. We are watching a mounting irrational hatred for Christ by these religious leaders from Jerusalem. They are standing before Jesus with their hearts filled with venomous hatred, and for no reason. He did great works of mercy among them, yet they despised Him. And the same is true today. The world hates Christianity and would love to erase any

memory of it from history. Hatred for Christianity is mounting and becoming more violent, even in our own country.

The first response recorded is from the crowd. They were amazed at what Jesus did. They probably shook their heads wondering if they really saw and heard right. This doesn't mean they repented and believed in Him as their Messiah, although they are likely wondering, "Could this be the Messiah?" People are amazed at lots of things. People are blown away by magicians and contortionists and performers on America's Got Talent. I remember seeing a young girl on YouTube so pliable she could basically turn herself inside out. I was amazed! So this general population group is amazed. Who wouldn't be, seeing a mute man suddenly speak!

Then there is the response from the Jerusalem religionists who spit out blasphemous slander at Jesus. They impugn his character by charging Him to be functioning in the power of the devil! Beelzebul means lord of the flies or possibly lord of dung. He was the Canaanite god in the Old Testament that some of the Israelite kings even worshipped. But the Jews came to apply his name to the devil. So here they are maliciously attacking Jesus' character and trying to paint him as empowered by Satan. Imagine that? Blaspheming Him right in His presence. Blasphemy is the unpardonable sin, to declare Jesus was doing his works in the power of the devil. Their hatred was irrational and intense.

The third group consisting of the Pharisees and scribes obnoxiously called out, no, they demanded, "Do a sign from heaven! We demand a sign, we demand a sign. We don't have enough evidence to tell if you are the real deal. Do something to prove yourself." What did they expect? What were they looking for? "Maybe darken the sun or make the moon do loopy loops so we really know you are who you claim to be." People's problem with Christ is not that they don't have enough evidence. Creation displays His greatness everywhere. Even the eye of the fly points to the reality of the Creator. Of course, Jesus' resurrection from the dead is the greatest sign of all. But are people convinced? Do they repent and believe the gospel? No, they need new hearts to believe.

The world doesn't have an evidence problem. They have a heart problem. They don't like the whole idea of one true, exclusive religion. If we say Christianity is just a human idea or one of other equally valid religions, or say you can take it or leave it, or say you can be a Christian and live however you want, the world would not oppose us. But saying that Jesus Christ is the only way to God goes against the grain of the sinner's heart. Whether it's creationism, or only two fixed biological genders, or marriage being strictly between a man and a woman, or the Bible is absolutely without error and sufficient for all of our needs to live for God, or the existence of heaven and hell and everyone who rejects Christ will go to hell, or standards of right and wrong are determined by the Bible, the exclusivity of Jesus Christ, you must be born of God, sin is real, judgment is coming, all this and far more brings out the world's mockery, ridicule, and hatred. When John Bunyan's wife pled her husband's innocence, Judge Twisdon simply asserted, "His doctrine is the doctrine of the devil." Luther was called a heretic and worse and the pope said he was a drunken German who would talk differently when he sobers up. Little did he know what was coming; irrational responses to Christ and biblical Christianity.

### **Third, Jesus knows how to answer His critics – vv. 17-20**

*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.*

Notice, Jesus knew their thoughts. He knows yours too. I was praying the other day and confessing some sins when suddenly I thought, "I don't want to tell God about that sin. That's too humiliating." Then I remembered He knows my every thought. I may as well pour it all out, the good, the bad, and the ugly. Psalm 139 says He knows our thoughts from afar!

These haters of Christ apparently were whispering their accusations among themselves, not realizing

Jesus was hearing every thought and word. And don't you just love His answers? He doesn't have to think, "Hmm, what should I say here?" The first answer He gives is that their blasphemy is ridiculous, to think that Satan would cast out his own demons. Their accusations were totally irrational and worthless.

The second answer about their sons is difficult, but apparently if they are charging Him with working in Satan's power, then they would have to say their own people who try to cast out demons are also working with Satan's power.

Verse 20 is a sermon. "But if I cast our demons by the finger of God...." That is so good. In Exodus 8:19 during the ten plagues when Aaron threw dust into the air and the dust became gnats all over Egypt, Pharaoh's magicians admitted, "This is the finger of God." This is God-stuff! The finger of God means the absolute, no question about it a work of God Almighty and you do well to acknowledge that. That's exactly how Jesus was doing His work, by the power of God.

Then Jesus adds, "If this is God's power, and it is, then you better recognize something big here. You are looking not at Satan's work, but at the presence of God's kingdom, God's rule and reign." The best thing they could do would be to acknowledge God. And the best thing you could do in the face of all the evidence that Christ, the gospel, the fulfilled prophecies, and transformed lives are real is to confess your sin and enter that kingdom by simple faith. Jesus in His very person brought the reality of the God's kingdom into Satan's domain. We're still preaching the gospel of the His kingdom. You enter God's kingdom by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone. When you come to Christ, you are transferred from Satan's domain of darkness into God's kingdom, the kingdom His Son of love. Every believer you meet represents the truth of that conquering kingdom.

#### **Fourth, Jesus came to smash the devil's empire – vv.21-22**

*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.*

Now we're really at the good stuff. If you will accept that the strong man is Satan and the Stronger Man is Jesus, these two verses will blow your socks off.

Satan is the strong man. God created him, but he rebelled and became God's greatest enemy. Shortly he found his way into the Garden of Eden. He got all decked out as a beautiful creature to insinuate his lies into the heart of beautiful Eve. Satan is a liar and the father of lies. He was a murderer from the beginning. He brought sin and death and all kinds of evil and horrors and diseases and pain and suffering into this world. He took over the earth. He is the prince of the power of the air and he owns and rules every last unbeliever. 1 John 5:19 says we are of God but the whole world lays in the power of the evil one, Satan. 2 Timothy 2:26 says every unbeliever is Satan's prisoner, whether the prisoner is a morally upright and religious person or a monster like Baghdadi. Matthew Henry wrote, "The heart of every unconverted sinner is the devil's palace, where he resides and where he rules."

Satan is fully armed with an arsenal of lies and deceptions. He is the master deceiver (Rev.12:9). And the amazing thing is that his possessions of lost people are pretty much undisturbed or "in peace" under his rule. That's because people without Christ don't realize to whom they belong. They don't really fear God except in a superstitious way. They don't worry about their little sins – everybody does them. They seldom think seriously about why they are here and where they are going. They hope they've been good enough to merit heaven if there is a heaven. They just do their lives, earn money, raise a family or live the single life, try to stay fit or lose some weight, trying to enjoy life as best they can. They almost never think about what will happen to them when they die, except maybe they'll go to a better place or they'll just stop existing. They are undisturbed spiritually under Satan's spell.

But here comes the Stronger One, in verse 22. All hail King Jesus! God told Satan he would bite Jesus' heel but Jesus would crush his head. And that's what's happening in this verse. Jesus Christ attacks, overpowers, strips the devil of his armor, – his weapons of sin and death – and distributes all the goodness of this world to His people, you and me. How did Jesus attack and overpower Satan? Jesus drove him away at the temptation. Satan entered Judas to betray Jesus in that garden. Satan's people mocked, spit on, beat, and shot their venomous hatred at Him there in Pilate's hall. Then they murdered Him. But the Stronger One was right on target. After bearing the sins of all His sheep, He arose three days later from the grave with a mighty triumph o'er His foes. That was the strategic smashing of Satan's head. Satan is doomed, defeated, but he doesn't go down quietly. Satan knows he is doomed so spends the next two thousand years holding on to his captives and trying to derail any Christian he can. He continues to spread his lies around the world, in government, in the academic world, in the world of entertainment. He hates God and all God's people. He fosters conflict among believers through anger and bitterness, tries to destroy marriages, and causes strife in churches. He promotes pride and rebellion and discouragement and apathy. That's why you need to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Put on God's armor to stand against the devil's wiles and lies. He walks around seeking Christians to devour. Resist him by being firm in your faith. Know your Bible and apply it's truths to your life.

Satan is doing as much damage as possible deceiving the nations. At some point in human history he will present the Anti-Christ and False Prophet (Revelation 13) to bring a three and one-half reign of terror the world has never yet experienced, the last half of the tribulation period.

But Christ is the Stronger Man. Revelation 19 describes His glorious Cavalry Charge out of heaven down to earth, followed by His people on white horses. He will descend to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14), conquer Satan's armies, throw Satan's Anti-Christ and False Prophet into the lake of fire, bind Satan in the abyss for 1000 years, and after that Satan will get his final crushing in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10). The deceiver devil will go into the Lake of Fire to be tormented day and night forever and ever. That's the final end of that strong man who barged into the Garden of Eden Paradise deceiving Adam and Eve. He wreaked havoc throughout human history, but will be finally and forever conquered by the Stronger Man, Christ Jesus! "All hail King Jesus!"

**Fifth, you have a choice to make; there's no neutrality in this great spiritual conflict. – v. 23**

*23 "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.*

What an awesome statement. There are no spectators in this cosmic war. Everyone is either on one side or the other. There is no fence to sit on. You begin in this world belonging to Satan. Christ's whole mission was to please His Father by invading Satan's kingdom and redeeming God's people from Satan's power. Only one side wins. You have a choice to make. You must step across that line to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, bowing your heart to Him as your Lord and Savior. Those who do that belong to the Stronger Man. With Christ as our Savior, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us and rescued us out of the devil's domain. There is no if and maybe with Christ. With Him you are on the winning side. Thank Him. Praise Him. Live for Him.