

On June 16, 1858... Abraham Lincoln gave a famous speech known as the *House Divided Speech* in Springfield, Illinois... that was based on a principle that comes from our passage of study this morning. ... The occasion for which Lincoln spoke... was to accept the Illinois Republican Party's nomination for United States senator. ... This became the launching point for his unsuccessful campaign against Stephen Douglas. (Lincoln lost that election – but his speech is well remembered.)

Lincoln used this speech to create a lasting image of the danger of disunion because of slavery. ... At that time... there was division in the United States between the slave states and the free states. ... Lincoln said:

*“A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new—North as well as South.”*

One thing for sure... Lincoln understood the principle of what Jesus (first) declared in our passage for today. He knew the mess that would be created in this nation... as long as it was a divided country.

(And) we sure do face a divided nation today. ... The division has (largely) been created by our self-serving political leaders... who pit poor against wealthy... homosexuals against heterosexuals... black against white... gun owners against those who are worried about gun violence... and now (in recent years) socialism against capitalism. They find ways of exaggerating divisions... so that they can come along on a white horse...

presenting themselves as the solution. “If you elect **ME**... I am going to fix this problem...”

Our great nation is in a moral and financial mess - that continues to deepen every day. ... But the BIGGEST reason... is because we have ignored the Lord... ... **We’ve got a mess for sure** ... and we need God’s help... to get out of it!

History books show us how Abe Lincoln applied the principle of “A House Divided Against Itself”... But how does it apply to you and I today? ... Well here is how I am about to apply it to us. ... We will examine Luke 11:14-28 (which contains the principle that Abe Lincoln used in his famous speech) ... and we will extract several Biblical principles from it... that if they are violated... they will surely make a mess out of our lives. So... if you want to avoid some unnecessary messes... then take heed to what is revealed in this section of Scripture that we come to (here) in Luke chapter 11.

Here is some background – before we get into the Bible text itself. ... Throughout His ministry... Jesus exercised His divine authority over the dominion of evil... (what we might also call “the kingdom of darkness.”) He reversed the physical effects of sin... by healing all forms of diseases... He brought people back from the clutches of death... and MANY TIMES He drove demons out of people... sending them into the abyss. All of this has been Jesus over-powering Satan’s dominion here on earth. Jesus has attacked the “strongman” (Satan) over-powered him and divided the spoils that Satan had been protecting. This is the big picture... (the context that Luke would have us see.) There is a great struggle between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness.

We must be careful to not treat our passage in Luke (today) apart from this huge struggle that we have already been seeing in this Gospel. ... So #1.) View our passage in the broader context of what Jesus has been doing – in attacking Satan’s domain on earth. #2.) Put aside our twenty-first-century dedication to science and technology (in so-far-as) it dismisses angels and demons (these invisible spiritual beings)... as figments of fantasy... or mirages of myth. ... According to the Bible... (indeed - our passage today) these creatures are very real and should **not** be taken lightly. ... They are (in fact) powerful combatants in “an invisible war” that surrounds us – all the time.

Soon after God created the world in perfect splendor... Satan usurped the throne of creation when he enticed Adam and Eve to believe him - instead of God. (You can read about it in Gen. 3:1–6). ... On that day... all of creation fell under Satan’s dominion. Now we suffer disasters... diseases... death... and decay. ... We (also) now live in a world order characterized by chaos... selfishness... violence... fear... (and... .. corrupt politicians.) ... Jesus came to change all of that... but Satan will not give up without a fight - **to the bitter end**. Consequently... we live in a combat zone.

Today’s episode in Luke’s Gospel begins with Jesus casting out a demon... (which by now has become almost routine for us - as readers. We have seen it over and over... here in Luke.) ... And this time... Luke even describes this miracle with a slight air of “humdrum.” Few details are given to us... as it almost seems incidental.

(Now) we know from other recorded encounters with demons that they manifest themselves in a variety of ways (including otherwise normal

physical ailments.) ... In this case... we will see that the demon controlled the man's vocal cords - preventing him from speaking. ... However... this demonic agent of evil was no match for the power and authority of Jesus - and immediately... the man began to speak.

### Luke 11:14

Please try to imagine this scene. ... To be (maybe) twenty-five years old... or (perhaps) thirty-five or (even) forty-five or sixty-five... and ever since the demon entered him... NEVER AGAIN could he utter a word... - what must that have been like? ... Can you even imagine...? ... But not only **that**... consider **this**... ... He lived in a culture where only a few could read or write. ... So he would have had VERY LITTLE ability to communicate (*in any way*) with others. ... How do you participate (as you once did) in normal everyday life...?

Having such restricted capacity of communication... this poor man in Luke 11 (very likely) could not speak ...**or write!** ... His needs and his feelings could only be conveyed by a frustrating combination of facial expressions... body language... gestures... and sounds that (probably) - he alone could understand. ... There must have been times when he felt like a prisoner within his own body. ... And that feeling was all due to the fact that his tongue was **chained** by a demonic spirit... that satisfied its perverse pleasure by keeping him unable to communicate. ... ... To be tongueless was one thing... but to have one's tongue chained by a profound evil... was much worse.

But suddenly as the mute man stood before Jesus... Luke writes: "Jesus was casting out" the demon. ... (No doubt) the man could feel it. His tongue

was free... and suddenly he spoke again. ... With increasingly joyous volume... he would have praised his deliverer. “*Thank you, Master! Hallelujah! I can speak! Praise God! Thank you, Jesus! Hosanna!*” ... And our verse says: seeing this... the people marveled! (Or “the crowd was amazed...” ) ... They knew the man and had grown accustomed to the man’s muteness. They would not have imagined that his situation would ever change. ... So the onlookers all knew it was a miracle.

Matthew also records this same incident... except Matthew includes some additional details. In Matthew 12:22-23... we learn that the man was BLIND and mute. And after he saw and spoke... some of the crowd asked if Jesus might be the Messiah. The healing of the man was a sign that Jesus is the “Coming One” that they were expecting.

Here is something for us to know... which helps explain why the crowd knew this was a miracle. ... The Jews in Jesus’ day had their own exorcists... who sought to cast demons out of people. ... But (GET THIS...) they believed that they had to make the demon reveal his name - or they had no authority over the demon to cast it out. ... According to the Jewish thinking of that day... the demon was impossible to cast out because he made the man unable to speak... and unable to reveal the name of the demon. ... But Jesus **WAS** able to cast the demon out of the man... which had caused his muteness. ... (No wonder everyone marveled!)

But our passage here in Luke (as well as in Matthew) certainly makes it clear... that even though the crowd marveled – because of the obvious miracle – many refused to believe. ... Instead of rejoicing that God had sent the Redeemer... the religious leaders were rebelling against the truth of God’s Word... and rebelling against this indisputable sign... by seeking

to discredit Christ's work and character. ... (Boy! It just goes to show that people can be amazed... and still not like what they see!) ... Imagine people being so blind that they could not distinguish a work of God from a work of Satan!

### **Luke 11:15**

Unbelief loves to undermine clear evidence of God's love and power... in this case in the form of slander. ... This is about the only alternative for those who witness undeniable supernatural activity in the world.

The terrible words: "*It is by Beelzebul, the prince of the demons, that he casts out demons,*" show how intensely these critics hated Jesus. They despised him because of the crowds that were always gathering around him... because He claimed divine prerogatives... did not honor their traditions about the sabbath... fasts... and other restrictions... He associated with publicans and sinners... He was what they considered a nuisance... and was their opposite. To be sure... not all the Pharisees and scribes hated Jesus... but many did.

This name "**Beelzebub**" in the Greek is **Beelzeboul {beh-el-zeb-ool'}**. This name had become in Hebrew culture, an alternative name for Satan. It meant "Lord of the House." ... When we go back into the Old Testament... this name is rendered in 2 Kings 1:2 as *Baalzebub* which means "Lord of the Flies." ... There was a play on words as the word **zebul** resembles the word **zebel** which means "dung." ... So... these hard-hearted Pharisees were saying that Jesus was in a league with the Lord of the Flies (the God of dung and dead animal carcasses.) They were not coming to grips with the reality of the situation.

People make the same mistake today of rejecting reality and make an absolute mess out of their lives. ... Many believe they don't need the Lord and can do just fine without Him. ... Some do not acknowledge there is a God or that He is their Creator - in spite of the evidence we find in nature. This is why the Lord calls them "fools."

**Psalm 14:1 (ESV)**

*<sup>1</sup> The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.*

**Romans 1:20 (ESV)**

*<sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

The self-dependence of those who reject God... makes them shun a God-dependent attitude... that we need to have. ... They put their security in that which is insecure. ... Eventually... they get themselves into situations that leave them helpless... frustrated... and stressed beyond their abilities. Many become severely depressed over the consequences of their sin. They make decisions or choices that make a further mess out of their lives. But it is not JUST unbelievers who do this. Christian also make messes out of their life... by facing challenges in their life... as though they don't need the Lord and can do just fine without Him. It is only when they realize that they are in trouble that they return to their God-dependent attitude. (Praying the Lord's Prayer every day... helps us re-set ourselves with a God-dependent attitude.) ... .. Don't reject the reality that God shows you! ... After the obvious miracle – there was another reaction. It wasn't JUST outright rejection. Others (who marveled) wanted more proof. They wanted to test Jesus further and have Him give them a sign out of Heaven.

## Luke 11:16

For some of the Pharisees... the jury was still out. It is not clear **what** was still to be proved. They witnessed an obvious miracle – and marveled at it. But (perhaps) they thought Messiah needed cosmic miracles for His credentials. They were foisting their own suppositions onto God's truth. It is not God's truth – unless it meets all of MY imposed criteria. Earthly miracles are not good enough.

They may have thought the proper benchmarks for Messiah would be like the turning back of the sun... which the Old Testament records in 2 Kings 20:8-11... or maybe manna from Heaven (just as Exodus 16:4 documents.)

Let me tell ya... if you want to avoid making a mess in your life... don't **YOU** do this. ... .. *Huh...? Me...?* ... Yes... my fellow sinners(!) ... Every last one of us is vulnerable to adding our own understandings to God's Word. We are not beyond having our own PRE-understandings that **blind** us to teaching and understanding that God has for us... when we read His Word.

Many of us are so caught-up in our own selves that we will read a convicting verse like Philippians 2:3...and 14... and miss the message.

### **Philippians 2:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*

### **Philippians 2:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> *Do all things without grumbling or disputing,*

Obviously **those** verses must mean something **else**... because I don't want them to mean what their plain meaning says. It is too hard!



**Ephesians 5:25-28 (ESV)**

*<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.*

**Matthew 5:38-42 (ESV)**

*<sup>38</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup> But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup> And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup> And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. <sup>42</sup> Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.*

I'm sure that I don't need to understand these literally. ... .. do I ?

Maybe we have made a few messes... because we have foisted our own suppositions onto God's truth. ... Every time we come to the Scriptures... we need to recognize our human nature that brings our own PRE-understandings (our own presuppositions) and forcing them onto God's Word to blind us or alter what it actually says. Recognize your vulnerability and humbly ask God to show you... where you are doing it. **[ P A U S E ]**

The religious establishment's rejection of Christ was so insulting and so outrageous that (humanly speaking) Jesus could have simply turned away without a word. ... Who could blame Him? ... It is not easy to answer religious fools. ... But they were standing on the edge of the Abyss... and Christ cared about their souls' that were in peril.

They were tottering on the edge of an eternity of judgment. ... What they had just witnessed was a direct... unambiguous... demonstration of the Holy Spirit. ... Will they continue to reject the Holy Spirit and call “Ultimate Good” - “evil”?

But merciful Jesus would not let them go on without explaining to them exactly what they were doing. ... He was not going to let them suppose that reason was on their side.

### **Luke 11:17-18**

All the way up to this chapter... Luke has been presenting Jesus' wholesale... ongoing attack on Satan and the effects of his kingdom. Luke has written of at least ten instances of healing... usually mentioning (as well) that He was also casting out many demons.

This was shaky logic that Jesus' accusers employed. Satan would have to be working against himself. Satan could not have any benefit at all. He would be destroying his own work. Satan is out to destroy humankind. His influence is seen in disease and death – so when Jesus reversed disease and death (over and over again) – Satan would be working against himself.

### **Luke 11:19-20**

The point is that what the opponents say about Jesus... they must accept for anyone else who does the same thing. If Jesus exorcises by Satan... then so do other exorcists. ... But if others — whether Jewish exorcists or the disciples — exorcise by God's power... then so does Jesus. It is one or the other.

It is inconsistent for you... my critics... on the one hand to approve of the work your “sons” — probably “followers” — are doing when they presumably cast out demons... and... on the other hand... to condemn My demon-expulsions. ... Will not your sons (sensing this inconsistency) be your judges?

The slander and charges that they were making ended up incriminating themselves. ... How were these Jews casting out demons? By what power did they do this? How was their work different than the work of Christ? Did they do this by God’s power or by Satan’s? They were inconsistent in their approval of what their sons or followers were doing. They were also inconsistent in their condemnation of what the Lord was doing? Jesus asked them: *“Won’t your sons notice your inconsistency and end up condemning you?”*

### **Luke 11:21-22**

Here Satan is fully armed with all kinds of demons guarding his palace. This whole scene changes (however) when Someone Who is stronger attacks and overpowers him - as Jesus had just done in sending the demon out of the man (and had done many times previously). ... Satan cannot stand against God or against Christ. Jesus overpowers Satan.

*“I’m not under Satan, instead, I’m proving that I am stronger than he is.”*

I noted earlier... that Matthew (in his Gospel rendering of this story) mentioned that there were some who witnessed Jesus’ healing of the demon-possessed man – and wanted to be on the side of Jesus AND His critics. They were cowardly indecisive... appearing to be on neither side. But is neutrality possible...? Jesus spoke directly to that.

## Luke 11:23

The line has been drawn. There are two kingdoms — God's and Satan's. Satan is active and powerful in the world... but God's Kingdom is far stronger and will eventually triumph. ... People cannot be neutral in this matter. ... Either they choose to side with God... or they do not.

Spiritual realities have not changed. Every man... every woman... is either for Christ or against Him. Compromise fails. It makes messes!

When "the sons of God" married "the daughters of men"... the result was the Flood (Gen. 6:1, 2, 13). ... When King Saul brought God an offering of partial obedience... he was rejected as King by God (1 Sam. 15:1–23). ... By subordinating the true religion of Jehovah to selfish political interests... Jeroboam brought a curse upon himself... his family... and his nation (1 Kings 12:25–30; 13:4, 5; 14:6–16). ... And when Peter (in a moment of weakness) compromised the doctrine of "*salvation solely by grace*"... he deserved the rebuke administered by Paul (in Gal. 2:11–21). ... The policy of "fearing Jehovah and worshiping one's own gods" **never** succeeds.

Jesus stated that it was impossible to be neutral in the battle between Christ and Satan. The people who were watching had to make up their minds. If they thought Jesus was casting out demons by the power of Satan... then they were actively **against** Him.

To further illustrate the danger of attempting to be neutral about him... Jesus explained what can happen to such people. ... Unfilled and complacent people are easy targets for Satan.

## Luke 11:24-26

This is the picture of a person delivered from a demon... but not yet filled with Jesus. ... It is a picture of a person who tries to be neutral. ... They say they are not for Satan... but they are also not for Jesus. ... Jesus shows us that this is impossible.

This illustration is about a person who tries to be neutral by reforming him or herself through personal effort and self-help. It often does not last long... and such attempts end in disaster. ... It is not enough to be emptied of evil. The person must then be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish God's new purpose in his or her life.

Self-reformation without regeneration and the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit is fatal. Temporary moral reformation is inadequate. Anyone who purges evil but puts nothing in its place is in grave moral danger. This emphasizes the utter danger in today's postmodern world... with its profound inwardness and focus upon self... of employing techniques and technologies that leave a house swept clean and in apparent order *and yet empty*. ... If a man or woman is empty and without God... any sin... any perversion... is possible. ... Worse habits can come. ... A vacuum has to be filled with something. And it needs to be the Spirit of God. [ P A U S E ]

### **Luke 11:27-28**

While Jesus addressed this mixed audience of critics and supporters... (men and women)... a woman shouted a word of affirmation to Jesus. Her blessing on His mother was considered an especially high compliment in an age characterized by honoring parents. ... She said (in effect) "*Your mother is a blessed woman for having such a wonderful son; she must*

*have done something right!*" ... .. Yes... what she said was good. It was wonderful ... but not complete.

In response to the woman's blessing... Jesus offered a counter blessing... expressing His desire for responsiveness to God's word. Those who hear God's message and then heed it are the ones most deserving of honor.

What I see in this woman's outcry is another means by which we make messes that we can avoid. Sentimentalists (like this woman) have a tendency to romanticize God's revelation – rather than obey it. Jesus is giving some confrontational teaching and this woman wanted to praise Jesus' mother – "*My-oh-my... What a wonderful person Your mother must be...*" Jesus' reply puts an end to such sentimental rhetoric. He tells us it is better to belong to Him spiritually than biologically.

The sentimentalists usually manage to confuse the issue. They like to romanticize finding God in the great out-of-doors — in the mountains... the fields... and the oceans... and the beauty of Jesus' sayings. ... Certainly God made all the beauty of the world... and Jesus' words are wonderful. But... if you really want to see God's blessing... start obeying His Word!

Mary's personal blessedness did not consist exclusively... or even primarily in the fact that she had given birth to the Messiah. Her blessedness was in this - that she had listened carefully to the word of God and had surrendered herself to His will. ... When she was confronted with mystery of Jesus' birth by the angel Gabriel... she said: "*Behold, the handmaid of the Lord. May it be with me according to your word!*" And then she went out and faced hardship after hardship in order to obey. ... **[ P A U S E ]** ...

I need to bring our time to a close... and I am going to do so in the same manner that I have been doing quite a bit (lately.) I will use the wise words of Chuck Swindoll – who I learn so much from.

*We do not fight an enemy we can see, and that fact will play games with our minds if we allow it to. Fortunately, we have the power of Christ on our side, which guarantees victory. Still, to withstand the attacks of the adversary, keep these three thoughts at the forefront of your mind.*

*First, if we wish to understand Satan's strategy, we need information. The information you can count on is the Word of God. Open a concordance, find the words "devil," "Satan," "demons," and related terms, and then conduct your own search-and-discover study. See what the Scriptures teach about the enemy. You will be amazed, not only at what is revealed, but by how much of your knowledge doesn't come from Scripture. If we wish to do battle, and if we wish to understand the enemy's strategy, we need reliable information. And that's found in the Word of God.*

*Second, if we plan to withstand enemy attacks, we need protection. We need more than information; we need divine protection. God has listed our primary implements of war in Ephesians 6:11–18. It's all spelled out for you. Learn about the "armor of God," and learn to use it.*

*Third, if we hope to be protected from demonic invasion, we need salvation.*

*Placing one's faith and trust in Christ for salvation and eternal life is step one. Nothing else matters if you don't belong to Him. In fact, the battle doesn't even begin for you until you have sided against Satan by giving your life to the Lord.*

Avoid making unnecessary messes (or worse) in your life!