

## Luke 11:14-26

### *Whose Side Are You On?*

**Main idea:** Jesus is stronger than all, but will you rest in His strength?

I've only ever really followed one sport my whole life, and it was baseball while I was growing up. I don't follow it any more, but especially when I was in elementary school, I would watch every Cardinals game I could on tv, and I loved going to see them play at Busch Stadium whenever I could.

But since then, I haven't really followed any sports, not even baseball, but I am still impressed by the skill and cooperation that it takes to play a sport. I mean, it's just a really neat thing to see a team work together with a common goal, when every player knows and does their job so that their team will win.

I want you to watch this football video and see if you catch what's really going on. If you've seen this clip before, don't give it away, because I want to see if anyone notices it for themselves.

**[video: Jim Marshall clip]**

Ok, so what just happened?

Jim Marshall, playing for the Minnesota Vikings in 1964, recovered the ball after a fumble and started running, and he was able to outrun everyone, and make it all the way to the end zone, thinking he had scored a touchdown, but once he got there, he was kindly told by a member of the other team that he had run the wrong direction, and that he had scored a safety for the other team!

Now, that kind of thing would never happen in baseball, because it's impossible to score for the other team in baseball, unless you just intentionally throw the game, but then it wouldn't be an accidental thing to play for the other team.

Well, anyway, when Jim Marshall ran the wrong way with the football, it actually wasn't the only time this kind of thing has ever happened. In fact, if you do a search on youtube for "football player ran the wrong way," it will show you nearly a thousand videos of the same kind of thing ranging from kids to college to the NFL. And it's not just a football thing. It happens in basketball when someone shoots and scores on the other team's basket. It happens in hockey when a player scores in the wrong net. It even happens in foosball when you score on your own goal!

And when any of these things happen, one teammate might say to another, "Whose side are you on?" Because it seemed like they were playing for the other team. Of course, in all of these situations, what happened was accidental, but how often do we also play for the other team accidentally?

Or even worse, how often do we play for the other team on purpose, throwing the game because we secretly doubt our team will win?

Every time we sin, every time we doubt God, every time we shrink back from following God, failing to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we're playing for the wrong team. Even if we say we're on God's side, we often display by the way that we live that we have a different coach, and his name is Satan.

So throughout my sermon this morning, I want you to consider this question: whose side are you on?

Luke chapter 11, starting in verse 14.

Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons," while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first." (Luke 11:14-26)

*Lord Jesus, help us to choose Your side. We're incapable by ourselves, in our sin, so help us. You are stronger than all, so please, be our strength, and help us to rest in Your strength. In Your name we pray, Amen.*

A little over ten years ago, for some demented reason, I decided to watch a few movies about exorcisms. Among others, I watched *The Exorcist*, *Possessed*, and *the Exorcism of Emily Rose*, all of which were supposedly based on true stories.

And while all of those movies and movies like them are meant to be scary, and they often were scary because of Hollywood special effects, they were also absurd. Because I've never seen a

single demon act like they do in those movies, even though I'm convinced more and more that I've encountered many demons in my life.

The demons in those movies speak like this.

**[App plays demon's voice saying, "The demons in those movies speak like this."]**

And there's always a scene where they float over their bed or their head spins around. I mean, if you saw someone in real life doing those sorts things or really speaking with that demon voice, there would be no doubt, right? You'd say, "Yep, that's a demon."

But demons in the Bible are often more subtle than that. Sure, some of them cut themselves, and run around naked, but some of them simply caused people to have seizures. And the one we read about today caused a man to be mute. You see, not every demon looks like the same. I think some people possessed by demons look just like you and me. In fact, the devil often uses what appear to be normal things, even good things to tempt us to follow him rather than God. Paul wrote this in 2 Corinthians 11:13-14, talking about preachers who were preaching for financial gain, basically charging for the gospel:

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:13-14)

In our present financial condition here at the church, I've got to tell you, I'm often tempted to preach in such a way that lays a heavy burden on you to give. Man, I could preach on tithing, and how much the Jews were required to give, how it wasn't just 10 percent of their income, but more like 30 percent, and talk about how the new covenant of grace never lessens the commandments of the law, but actually intensifies them, like how one of the Ten Commandments is "You shall not murder," but 1 John says that if anyone hates his brother, he is a murderer, so in the same way, we shouldn't just give a tithe, a tenth of our income, but all of it, just like the poor widow gave all that she had to live on. So give it all to the church! Give it all cheerfully and sacrificially to the church, and be blessed! In fact, here, touch this handkerchief and be blessed by God!

That'll be \$50, pay up.

I could preach that way. I'm tempted sometimes to preach that way. And there was some truth in all of what I just said. And a lot of preachers today preach like that when it comes to giving to the church. After all, Satan often disguises himself as an angel of light. Satan twists the truth so that we'll believe and live a lie. But our motivation to give shouldn't be law, or burden, or financial gain, but a cheerful heart, because God has so graciously given to us.

And that's just one example of how Satan disguises himself in order to tempt us. Satan attempts to control us in many ways. Some of us are tempted by money and power, and others are tempted by the allure for the simple life, as if living a simple life can make us happy in itself. Some of us are tempted through the newest gadgets, and others are tempted to return to the good old days when such things weren't needed, as if the good old days were really any better than today.

Whatever it is that Satan tempts you with, remember this: Jesus is better. Jesus is greater. Jesus is more powerful and can deliver you from temptation and Satan's control. That's really the message of our whole passage this morning. Look at verse 14.

Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. (Luke 11:14)

Jesus can deliver you from Satan's power, from the power of the demonic. From the temptations that Satan and his demons bombard you with. If you struggle with a particular sin, and you just can't seem to shake it, whether greed, or gluttony, or pornography, or laziness, or anything else, it could be that Satan or a demon keeps tempting you with that thing, but don't give in! Jesus is more powerful! Jesus resisted all temptation His whole life, whether in the wilderness, or from His own disciples, or even while dying on the cross for our sin. Jesus was faithful to His Father in heaven, and He did it all for us, for you, so that by faith in Him, you have the Holy Spirit in you, so that you can rest in His strength, and you can overcome every temptation through the Holy Spirit's power working through you.

And when that happens, give God all the glory. When the mute man spoke because the demon was cast out, it says "the people marveled." They were amazed at what happened! They couldn't believe their eyes! What power! What grace! Jesus is stronger than any demon, any temptation to sin, and He can get you through anything because He is God.

So when you see God working in your life, praise Him for it. Praise Him for getting you through that rough spell with your health. Praise Him for a Christ-centered marriage. Praise Him for a good job, even if you sometimes think your job is more of a curse than a blessing, because God is providing for you through it.

But instead of praising God, some of the people who saw Jesus cast out this demon didn't believe in Him, but doubted Him. Verse 15.

But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons," while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. (Luke 11:15-16)

In other words, they were asking Jesus, "Whose side are You on?"

“Jesus, we see that You can do amazing things, but whose side are You on? Is it a sign from heaven, or a sign from hell?”

Some of them, Pharisees, according to Matthew, accused Jesus of being on Beelzebub's side. Now, Beelzebub was a false god of the pagan Philistines. Beelzebub was thought to be “the lord of flies,” or sometimes translated “the lord of dung,” in the way that you might see flies swarming around piles of dung, and in the process spread disease and impurity to people. When you think about it, flies are pretty disgusting creatures, because they have these sticky feet, and they land on things like poop and dead animals, and their sticky feet pick up some bacteria from these things, so when they land on other things, they spread that bacteria everywhere they go. It's really pretty disgusting, and that's what the false god Beelzebub represented. So the Jews changed one letter of Beelzebub and used Beelzebub as another name for Satan to point out that Satan is utterly disgusting and the spreader of sin and impurity. So by accusing Jesus of being on Beelzebub's side, they weren't just saying that Jesus had a demon, but that Jesus was disgusting, and nothing more than a great big pile of crap.

Now, I'm sorry if that word offends you. I usually don't use that word because quite honestly, I think it's a vulgar word. But I actually wanted to use an even stronger word, because that's what most of the Pharisees thought of Jesus. They thought He wouldn't amount to...that word, and that He was something disgusting to be disposed of. In their opinion, Jesus certainly wasn't worthy of praise.

But there were some who saw Jesus cast out the demon who then sought from Him a sign from heaven. They were wondering, “Maybe if we challenge Jesus about this, He'll give us a sign to prove to us that He's from God, from heaven, and THEN we'll believe in Him.” But does anything about that seem a little odd to you? They JUST SAW Jesus cast out a demon! That was a sign! In fact, according to Matthew's account of this story, Jesus had just healed a whole bunch of people who were following Him. That's a whole bunch of signs. It seems like everywhere Jesus went, He was showing Himself through signs, signs, everywhere a sign! And yet, they ignored the signs because to admit the signs would mean that they would need to submit to the One that the signs pointed to.

How many signs from heaven do you miss, or even ignore?

When things are going bad, do you blame God, or trust that He's wise and sovereign? And when things are going well, do you ignore God, or thank Him for every blessing that He graciously gives you? You see, every detail in life, even though sometimes difficult to experience, has a purpose, and it's a sign of His sovereign hand. Every sign displays His goodness.

You see, the truth is, everything around us points to the reality that God not only exists, but that He is stronger than all, creating all things from nothing, and that He loves us and invites us to know Him through Jesus Christ.

You see, God not only shows us signs, but invites us to His side. And the truth is, He's already on your side. He's not against you, but for you, because He loves you, and He's calling you to Himself, that you might love Him with all your heart as well.

Well, in response to all of these people who challenged the source of Jesus's power, Jesus said this. Verse 17.

But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Luke 11:17-20)

It's like that notion of someone playing for the other team. In baseball, the only way to play for the other team would be to intentionally throw the game. But if you're playing your heart out, you hit homeruns, you make every catch, and you lead your team to victory, no one can accuse you of throwing the game!

So when the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan, Jesus pointed out just how ridiculous that claim was! I mean, Jesus made it clear with His actions that He could not possibly be on Satan's side. He was on God's side. His power didn't come from the prince of demons. Jesus wasn't even friends with demons; He was against demons! He cast them out!

So Jesus told a parable to illustrate this reality.

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. (Luke 11:21-23)

Each one of us is like a palace. We are a temple. A house. And we can either be inhabited by the Holy Spirit, or by demons. And make no mistake, demons are strong. Jesus compares a demon to a strong man, fully armed.

But notice what happened when God showed up. It says, "when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil." Satan and his demons are nothing compared to God, and they know it. They flee from God! At the mere mention of Jesus and His power, His grace, Satan and his demons have no authority over man.

And yet, unless you trust in Jesus, they'll just come back, and make you even worse. When the gospel is preached, demons flee, but will only stay away if you place your faith in the Savior. Otherwise, Satan will re-claim you as a part of his team. Verse 24.

"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first." (Luke 11:24-26)

Here's the thing: God often blesses those who have not yet trusted in Christ. Sometimes it's through the gospel message being preached, sometimes maybe through the ministry of believers. God often helps someone get cleaned up, even when they've yet to truly trust in Jesus. So things are going well for awhile, but because the person hasn't surrendered to Jesus, the demons often come back to haunt him again.

So the question comes back to us again: whose side are you on? It's not just a matter of saying your on God's side, but actually trusting Him. Actually resting in Him. Not resting in this world, or in what it offers, but in Jesus, who is stronger and more loving than all.

And Jesus demonstrated exactly what that looks like. In obedience to God the Father, Jesus went all the way to the cross. He denied Himself. He denied the pleasures of this life. He considered them rubbish, refuse, that offensive word, so that all who trust in Him might be saved from all their rubbish.

You see, Jesus even became...that word...for us. He became the lowest of lows, refuse. He became our sin on the cross, and for a moment, God the Father was utterly disgusted with Jesus. The whole earth became dark, and Jesus cried out, "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" You see, Jesus suffered the penalty for our sin, separation from God, so that when we trust in Him, all our sins are washed away.

And as we learn to follow Jesus, we also take up our cross. We die to self, and live for Him. We're transferred from the side of Satan and self to God's side. We're transferred from the kingdom of this world to the kingdom of God. And that happens when we rest in God's strength to save us. So pray this with me right now.

*God, forgive me by Your grace and power. I've played for the wrong team so much of my life, but I want to be on Your side now. I surrender to You. Thank You, Jesus, for dying for me, that I might live in Your strength. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

If that was the first time you ever prayed something like that, please tell me after our service this morning. If you prayed it in faith, even just a little faith, hoping that God would forgive you, then

He will make that faith grow, and He will transform you so that you begin to live for Him, having Jesus as your Lord and Savior.