

## The Kingdom of God Has Come Upon You

Luke 11:14-36

KV. 11:20, “But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

We just had a blessed Easter celebration last week. Coming from the reality of Jesus’ resurrection, we have victory and a reason to live. Through a study of the resurrection (1Cor 15), I’ve been strengthened in the good news of Jesus. Because he lives, we can all have a sure hope in the power of Jesus’ resurrection.

Now, we are resuming Luke’s Gospel study. The Gospel is written in light of the Risen Christ. Today’s passage reveals the truth about spiritual warfare, that is, the unseen reality. Jesus casted out demons by the finger of God. This is a visible sign that the kingdom of God has arrived. Jesus is the one stronger who defeats the work of the devil and brings us healing and restoration. His kingdom is real and advancing with the power of the Spirit. Do you perceive it? Or are you on the fence about whether Jesus is greater than the darkness in your heart and in this world? How does Jesus’ power practically impact your life? I pray that the word today may powerfully reveal to us our King Jesus who gives us the victory and the light of his kingdom.

### 1. Jesus is stronger

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 tells us that Jesus was healing a demon-possessed man who was mute. Demonic forces made the man unable to speak. As a physician, Luke knew what was going on. Demonic power was at work. When Jesus cast out the demon, the mute man spoke. It was a miraculous healing. Jesus’ work is always life-giving. Jesus preached the kingdom of God, drove out demons, and healed the sick. Wherever Jesus works, there is restoration and life.

How did people respond? The crowd marveled (14). They were amazed at the miracle Jesus performed. But what did this miraculous healing mean? The skeptics suggested two negative options. Some of them slandered Jesus’ work, saying, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons” (15). But others wanted more proof through more spectacular signs from heaven (16). These responses are similar in today’s world. Modern skeptics assume that miracles do not happen and dismiss Jesus as a myth; others want to wait and see. Jesus’ opponents witnessed his miraculous healing and could not deny it, but tried to attribute it to the devil.

Jesus knew their thoughts and exposed their absurd logic. First, every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined. It would be ridiculous for Satan to drive out his own demons,

for then his kingdom could not stand (17-18). Basically, no devil is foolish enough to self-sabotage. Second, Jesus pointed out his opponents' double standard. If their followers drove out demons, they claimed it was done by the power of God (19).

Then Jesus said in verse 20, "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." The finger of God refers to God's power over all competing powers (Ex 8:19). Jesus' miracles are evidence of God's power over demons. By casting out demons, Jesus revealed God's majesty and power. This means that with Jesus' coming, the kingdom of God has arrived. Not that it has come in its final form, but that its presence has begun in our midst. In Jesus, the kingdom of God broke into our present world. We can think about this Kingdom in two aspects.

First, the arrival of the kingdom of God brings an enormous conflict with the devil and demons. Modern naturalism is ignorant of unseen reality. But Jesus shows unseen spiritual reality through a warfare analogy in verses 21-22: "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." Here, the strong man in his palace is the devil. But someone stronger than he comes and overpowers him, takes his armor, and divides the spoil. The "One stronger" is Jesus. He overpowers the devil, defeats him, and claims what rightfully belongs to him. The devil oppresses people through their sins and weaknesses, but his strong grip is broken when Jesus comes into the picture. As Jesus started his messianic ministry, he overcame the devil in the wilderness and cast out demons again and again. With Jesus' coming, Satan fell "like lightning from heaven" (Lk 10:18). God's rule is redemptive and liberates the oppressed by expelling evil forces. And when Jesus sent out the twelve, he gave them "power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases" (Lk 9:1).

Second, the kingdom of God brings healing. Jesus demonstrated God's present reign as he drove out demons and healed the sick. This is something that science cannot explain. Jesus' miracles were not for a show, but to redeem this broken world from diseases and the power of death. His miracles are pointers to the redemption of our bodies and the final resurrection. As Tim Keller expressed, "Jesus' miracles are not just a challenge to our minds but a promise to our hearts, that the world we all want is coming" (*The Reason for God*). Jesus' healings are signs that in his final kingdom, sickness and death would be completely destroyed.

We are often blind to spiritual warfare because of a society that pushes a naturalistic worldview and evidence-based reasoning that ignores unseen reality. How many of you are aware of the battle we have against the forces of evil? Many are suffering from dark oppression. Many including Gen Z'ers are suffering from anxiety or depression, and are lost in fun-seeking and addictions. Dark oppression is not the work of God; it is

demonic; it is the work of the devil who is active through our sins. We fall prey to the devil who prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. But do you know that Jesus has a position of authority over demonic powers? Jesus is stronger than the dark forces around us. Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil (1Jn 3:8). The Son of God shared in our humanity, so that by his death he might break the power of the devil who holds the power of death (Heb 2:14). In Jesus, there is victory, healing, restoration, and freedom from darkness. Amen!

## 2. Choose Jesus and obey his words (23-26)

In spiritual battle, there is no middle ground. Jesus says in verse 23, "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters." In our culture, tolerance is highly valued. We want to avoid offending others and try to be neutral about many things. But when it comes to the gospel, Jesus says that neutrality to him is opposition to him. When two kingdoms are at war, there are no spectators. One is either for Jesus or against Jesus. You may be sitting on the fence with respect to politics, but not with respect to Jesus. In spiritual warfare, we cannot be checked out and sitting on the sidelines. Everyone lines up on one side or the other.

In verses 24-26, Jesus teaches this through a story of an unclean spirit. The point is simple. There is no neutral ground in spiritual warfare. When you are cleansed of evil, you cannot leave your inner house empty. If your inner house, that is your heart, is left empty, it will be filled with something worse than what had departed. Many of us experienced much grace through the Easter celebrations. If your inner house is not filled with Jesus, the vacuum will be filled with more wicked spirits such as hypocrisy, self-glory, self-condemnation, judgmental spirit, and so on. So, what do we need? We need Jesus. Do you want true freedom from dark oppression? Choose Jesus. Constantly choose Jesus who is stronger than your sin and the devil. (An inspiring story of Cynthia Garret, TV host, illustrates this in her book *"I Choose Victory."* As a black woman who experienced childhood sexual abuse, teenage rape, and an abusive first marriage, she went through many hardships before rising in influence in Hollywood. Over the years God has given her tools to choose victory over being a victim. When asked, "what do you do today?" her answer is, "I choose victory.") As she emphasizes, "Victory is a choice. And it is your choice to make."

To choose victory means to hear and obey Jesus' word (27-28). As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd was moved and called out, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!" (27). It was one woman's version of, "Amen. Blessed is your mother! Your mom must be so proud of you!" But Jesus didn't reply, "Thank you. God bless you too." Instead, he gently deflected her praise and said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (28). Jesus is telling us that we become a part of his kingdom family through his words, not through

human relationships. Studying the Bible or hearing the message is not enough. We are blessed when we let Christ's message dwell in our hearts through obedience. We should choose his kingdom to reign in our lives by keeping God's words. Obedience to Jesus should be our lifestyle. If we fill our hearts with Jesus' words, we will live in Jesus' victory over the power of the devil. Obedience to Jesus builds our spiritual muscles. The more we exercise obedience to Jesus, the more strength we gain to resist the devil and his lies. As we choose Jesus daily and consistently, we are strengthened to win our spiritual battles!

### 3. Repent and receive Jesus as our King (29-32)

On Jesus' healing of a demon-possessed man, a growing crowd was gathering around Jesus. In verse 29, Jesus said, "This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." As they demanded that Jesus show more spectacular signs from heaven, he didn't play their game. It was the same temptation from the devil that Jesus already rejected in the wilderness. Jesus called them evil, that is, they were in dire need of repentance. Why? Asking for more signs was a smokescreen for their unrepentant hearts. Unbelief is a matter of the heart, and the central core of unbelief is "its willful abuse of truth" (Os Guinness, *Fool's Talk*). We may think that the more we witness miracles, the more we will believe. But do such signs automatically lead to faith? No. As long as people choose not to believe, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead (cf. Lk 16:31).

Jesus said, "...no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." They would be given only the sign of Jonah, a sign they did not seek to have. What is the sign of Jonah? Jesus says in verse 30, "For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation."

You know the story of Jonah. He was not a good example of God's servant because he disobeyed God. Maybe he was one of the worst messengers in the Bible because he hated the very people he was preaching to, who were the enemies of his people. But as he disobeyed, he was thrown into the sea and swallowed up by a huge fish. After he was delivered from his fishy grave, he went to Nineveh and preached repentance. His message was only one sentence, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned" (Jon 3:4). But when the Ninevites heard Jonah's message, they all repented, starting from the king, down to the animals, calling urgently on God to show them mercy. These Gentiles, who were seen as evil and hated by the people of Israel, repented at Jonah's preaching. Their repentance turned Jonah, an immature and reluctant messenger, into a successful preacher.

Jesus said in 32b, "...and now something greater than Jonah is here." Jesus is not only the greatest prophet of all, but he is the Lord of all prophets. He is the Yes and Amen of

promises made by all the prophets. He displayed the kingdom of God by the power of the Spirit. The people of Israel had the privilege to hear the matchless preaching of the Messiah and witness his life-giving miracles. But proud people didn't respond in repentance. Such people would be condemned at the judgment by the repentant Gentiles.

Indeed, Jesus is greater than anything else. Jesus' healings demonstrated the power of the kingdom. Now, by Jesus' cross and resurrection, God's supreme revelation has come to all of us. His death and resurrection are not a myth, but God's decisive revelation in history. His death for our sins is true; the power of his resurrection is real; his victory is real. Unlike Jonah, Jesus reaches out to the whole world full of compassion and love. Do we need more proof to believe? Some ask God for an emotional touch as a sign. But Jesus' death and resurrection is the truth regardless of our emotion. Jesus is the one who all the prophets pointed to. Christ who died for our sins and rose again from the dead is here. God's boundless love for us is fully revealed through his Son. The Spirit is calling out to all of us to receive Jesus with soft, repentant hearts before the impending judgment day. May we repent of our unrepentant hearts and receive Jesus as our King.

#### 4. Have Jesus' eyes (33-36)

Now, Jesus teaches about the Kingdom through the image of light and eyes. Look at verse 33. "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light." In this context, the lamp refers to Jesus who embodies God's word and kingdom. Jesus enables us to see things clearly. Through his compassionate love, truth, and power, Jesus shines brightly in our dark world. We must not block this light, but let it come in. Jesus teaches this in verse 34. "Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness." The eye here refers to the eye of our hearts. If the eye of your heart is healthy and receptive, light enters your heart and brightens your life. If the eye of your heart is bad, your life is full of darkness. Jesus warns us to "be careful lest the light in you be darkness" (35).

So, what should we do? We need a spiritual eye exam. If your viewpoint is dark, gloomy, negative, cynical, and hopeless, something is wrong with your eyes. If your viewpoint is self-centered and evil, it's like when you wear sun-blocking glasses, and the whole world will look dark. This is the devil's viewpoint. Is your eye healthy to see the world the way Jesus sees it? Today, people's viewpoints are significantly influenced and shaped by the digital world. According to the American Psychological Association, mental health issues (anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts) increased significantly in young adults over the last decade, suggesting that the shift may be due in part to the rise of social media. This is a huge problem, because people will tie their self-worth, values, and perspectives

around what they constantly expose themselves to. If you develop spiritual blindness, you will have trouble seeing the spiritual reality and suffer in the darkness.

How can we have the light within us? We need to change our perspective. It's like, when you turn on the light, darkness is cast out. We need Jesus' eyes. Jesus' eyes see from the kingdom's perspective, because he is the kingdom in person. Wherever Jesus comes in, darkness is driven out, and life becomes full of light. We need spiritual eyes that receive the light of Jesus. Jesus invites us into his kingdom of light. Do you perceive that the kingdom of God has come upon you? May God change our perspective to see through the eyes of Jesus! Choose Jesus and his light, and your eyes will become healthy, and your life will be full of light. Amen.

Studying philosophy, I was under dark oppression, cynical, skeptical, and angry at the unjust society. Because of my cynical mindset, I could not love and understand people and the world. Through the power of the cross and his love, Jesus forgave me and liberated me from demonic oppression. On my journey of faith, I often struggled with my fear and doubt (especially, in Germany). And God has graciously taught me to choose Jesus' word and his victory. Now every morning, I choose Jesus and his victory for me and his kingdom. Now as we are preparing for the ISBC 2023, we pray for the manifestation of "His Glory"; that His glory will be manifested through the power of the Spirit, driving out darkness, giving us life, hope, and a wonderful vision in our Lord Jesus. When we enter into His glory, we will be changed and never be the same.

What makes you suffer most? Is darkness consuming you? Are you skeptical, sitting on the fence? The reality is that we are all struggling in a spiritual war. What do we need most? It's Jesus. Jesus is telling us, "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." Jesus died for our sins and has been raised from the dead. In Jesus, Satan's evil kingdom has been defeated. Nobody or nothing can be rivals to Jesus our King. Do you perceive the kingdom of God, breaking into our world with gentleness and the power of the Spirit? In the spiritual battle, which side do you choose? Jesus or the devil? Victory or defeat? Choose victory. Choose Jesus. May we choose Jesus daily through our sincere repentance. May we choose Jesus through filling our hearts with his living words. Then Jesus' light will make us see the world through God's eyes and help us to live as people of his kingdom. "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." Amen! Lord Jesus, come into our hearts this time and fill us with your kingdom. Amen!