

September 7th, 2008 “The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 14”

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Luke 11:14-20

Then Jesus cast a demon out of a man made dumb, enabling him to speak after the demon left. This filled the multitude with awe. But some charged, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of the demons.” Others challenged Him to show a sign from heaven.

Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to them, **“Every nation that fights against itself causes its own ruin. In the same way, a house that fights against itself cannot survive. So if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom survive?”**

“You say that I cast out demons by the power of Beelzebul. But if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, through whom do your sons do the same thing? They shall be your judges in this. But if through the finger of God I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you!”

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

Our last lesson was about prayer. Life is about our developing an intimate relationship with God, and prayer is the path to the development of this level of intimacy between us and God. We have the capacity, through our interaction with God in prayer, to develop such an intimate relationship with Him that He will allow us function on a level higher than we can imagine. There is no limit to the power of God. The limitation is in the quality of our relationship with Him. Jesus says to those that develop a relationship of maximum intensity with God, in

Luke 11:9-13:

“And I tell you, ask, and you’ll receive. Seek, and you’ll find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks, receives; and whoever seeks, finds; and the one who knocks will discover an open door.

“If your son should ask you for bread, which of you fathers would give him a stone? Or if he asks for fish, which of you would hand him a snake? Or if he asked for an egg, who would give him a scorpion? If you know how to give good gifts to your children—even though you’re evil— how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

The parallel that Jesus uses to describe this intimate relationship with God is the relationship between a father and son, which is generally a very intense relationship. Jesus’ point is that the power that we have with God is directly proportional to the intensity of the

relationship that we have with Him, which is why we are instructed to pray pointedly and persistently. **1Thessalonians 5:17-18** says:

17 pray without ceasing,

18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

But from conversation, Jesus moves into practical application. **Luke 11:14** records:

Then Jesus cast a demon out of a man made dumb, enabling him to speak after the demon left. This filled the multitude with awe.

The multitude that watched Jesus deliver the man from the demon and heal his dumbness knew that no one else had been able to heal the man, although there were others among the Jews that practiced medicine and still others that successfully prayed to cast demons out of people. The multitude was awestruck because the man's condition had been diagnosed as hopeless, but Jesus was, and is, able to call on God and successfully intervene in hopeless situations. Our power from God is directly proportional to the intensity of the relationship that we have with Him, and Jesus had the most intense relationship with God possible. Jesus declared to the Jews that were persecuting Him, in **John 10:30**:

30 I and My Father are one."

The achievement of oneness is the ultimate reason for all relationships, human and Divine. Oneness occurs when we yield our wills to the will of one another. Jesus was always in conscious contact with God through prayer, and always consulted with God before He decided to take action. This level of coordinated closeness through persistent prayer between Jesus and God is the actual meaning of Jesus' proclamation in **John 10:30**:

30 I and My Father are one."

However, not everyone that saw the great miracle that Jesus wrought was impressed. **Luke 11:15** records:

But some charged, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of the demons." Others challenged Him to show a sign from heaven.

The position of Jesus' challengers is that Jesus is a demonic spirit sent by Satan to deceive them, and is casting out demons as a decoy. Jesus Himself tells us, in **Matthew 24:24**:
24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

Jeremiah speaks of the coming of false prophets to Israel in **Jeremiah 5:26, 30-31**, which says:

26 'For among My people are found wicked men; They lie in wait as one who sets snares; They set a trap; They catch men.

30 "An astonishing and horrible thing Has been committed in the land:

31 The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?

The argument of the doubters is that Jesus is a false prophet, affiliated with satan rather than with God. Since satan does control false prophets, this argument that has a foundation in Scripture. Jesus is compelled to refute it. In **Luke 11:17-18**:

Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to them, "Every nation that fights against itself causes its own ruin. In the same way, a house that fights against itself cannot survive. So if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom survive?"

The first part of Jesus' argument is logical. How well would you do in a boxing match if you get in the ring with your opponent and begin punching yourself? Satan works by deception, not by stupidity. But the second part of Jesus' argument is conclusive. In **Luke 11:19-20**, Jesus says:

You say that I cast out demons by the power of Beelzebul. But if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, through whom do your sons do the same thing? They shall be your judges in this. But if through the finger of God I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you!

Jesus is not the first Jewish exorcist. There are others in Israel through whom God has done miracles of healing, and those people are praised for having power with God when their prayers are answered. But Jesus has done a greater work than they. If we praise God for the good things that the prophets have done, what is the logic of thinking that the exceptionally good things that Jesus has done are from satan?

But the attack on Jesus is not a matter of logic, or of reason, or of rationality. The attack on Jesus is a matter of envy and jealousy. Jesus has done exceptionally good things. But the Jewish religious leaders are focused on the fact that Jesus is not part of their group and He appears, to the multitude, to be better than they.

Now, the most important attribute that the leader of a religious group needs to have is humility. The leader has to be humble enough to know that he was not chosen by God to hold the position as leader because of his own goodness, but because of the grace of God given to him. It is a major problem when the leader gets the "big head", becomes large and in charge in his own mind, and begins thinking that he has an exclusive hot line to God and that nobody can tell him anything. God chooses to give someone leadership responsibility, but He may also choose to give someone other than the leader a word of knowledge or the power of perform a good work.

The leader, rather than being jealous, needs to be able to recognize that his power truly comes from God, and that he is simply a vessel being used at God's disposal. Jesus diagnoses the lack of humility that causes the Jewish leaders to reject that which they do not control in **Matthew 23:1-12**, which says:

- 1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,**
- 2 saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.**
- 3 Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.**
- 4 For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.**
- 5 But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.**
- 6 They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,**
- 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'**
- 8 But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.**
- 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.**
- 10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.**

11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

It is important for us to recognize that we are all peers. Christ is not just your Teacher; Christ is teaching all of us. God is not just my Father; God is Father to all of us. Titles can be descriptive, but titles can also be a problem when we allow pride to make us look down on those with whom we come into contact. Pride tells us that others are not on our level, but the truth is that we are only at the level upon which we are because of the grace of God. **Proverbs 16:19** tells us:

19 Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Philippians 2:3 tells us:

3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

The admonition to avoid pride is really good advice that the scribes and Pharisees declined to take. It would have been better had they heeded Jesus, because Jesus actually was, and is, better than all of them and of us. Jesus' works backed up His claims of relationship with God, and those that spoke against Him should have been ready to bow down to Him, but they were influenced by satan, the spirit that lives in the disobedient.

The prophet Ezekiel, calling satan the King of Tyre, records his demise in **Ezekiel 28:12-15, 17**:

12 “Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.

The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created.

14 “You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

15 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created till iniquity was found in you.

17 “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you.

Satan's heart was lifted up in pride, and he sinned. Satan tempts us to sin by persuading us that we are smarter and/or better than we are and that we should ignore the boundaries that God has set for us. We sin when we ignore the Word of God as if we know more life than about life than God does. **Genesis 3:6** tells us:

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

How could the woman see all of this goodness in a tree with poisoned fruit? The woman was deceived by the serpent, in **Genesis 3:4-5**:

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.

5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Yeah, but why would anyone trust a serpent over their Creator? Obviously, it was not because of the trustworthiness of serpents. The real problem was not one of trust; it was that the woman’s wanted the fruit of the tree before the serpent came along. Her attention was focused on the one thing in the garden that God told her that she could not have. It galled her that God withheld this from her, as if God knew what was best for her. The fruit of the tree was good for food and of course it was pleasing to the eye, in the woman’s mind, because God said that she couldn’t have it and she couldn’t figure out why. Yes, God said it was poison, but what did God know?

Why do people doubt God or contradict Him? Pride. Whenever an unruly child says to their parent, “You can’t tell me what to do”, that’s pride. Whenever we look at a speed limit sign and say, “You can’t tell me what to do”, that’s pride. Whenever we flout the laws of God and say, God, you can’t tell me what to do”, that’s pride.

Why do we ignore God and commit sin? Well, we always have an excuse, and it is usually that God’s law that prohibits something is incorrect. We know better than God, and so we decide that we don’t have to listen to him. Why? Pride.

Jolene had a serious problem. She tried to get advice from her counselor. She began by saying, “My boyfriend, well, we have a daughter together, thirteen months old...”

And the counselor immediately cut her off. “Why is he just a boyfriend and not a husband?”

Jolene responded, “I don’t know. We just never got married.”

The counselor replied, “What kind of an answer is that, Jolene?”

Jolene responded, “I don’t know. I really don’t have an answer for that.”

The counselor asked, “Do you have any more babies out of wedlock?”

Jolene responded, “I have another son, he’s four years old from a previous relationship.”

The counselor asked, “So how come you keep having babies with guys to whom you are not married?”

Jolene responded, “I don’t know.”

The counselor replied. “Okay. Whatever you ask me, I’m going to answer you ‘I don’t know’. Go ahead. Ask me your question. I’m just going to say ‘I don’t know’. Since you don’t want to think, and be honest and open with me, then why should I think and be honest with you?”

Jolene responded, “Well. I was young. I was fifteen when I...”

The counselor cut her off. “Well, you’re twenty now. What, had you never heard the word ‘marriage’ when you were fifteen? You never heard the word ‘adoption’? You never heard the word ‘birth control’? You never heard the word ‘abstinence’ at fifteen? But I still don’t know what that has to do with the second guy. I would have thought that you would have learned the lesson the first time. Now, you have two babies, no fathers under your roof, no marriages, and I can’t wait to hear your question that I’m going to say ‘I don’t know’ to.”

Jolene said, “I haven’t had the best upbringing.”

The counselor responded, “Well, your children aren’t getting the best upbringing either, and that’s your fault. And your upbringing doesn’t give you the right to hurt other people. So I don’t want to hear that excuse. We all can complain about something in our upbringing. All of us. Me too.”

Jolene said, “Well, I do my best with both of my children.”

The counselor responded, “To just say that is not good enough. Your best would have been to get married before having the children. And, why are you are still sleeping around and risking pregnancy with men that you don’t intend to marry. Why are you still risking messing up another child’s life? ‘I don’t know’ is not sufficient. If you don’t know why you are doing what you are doing, who knows?”

Now, if you sterilize yourself, you can sleep around with men all over the world. That’s your business. But what you are doing now involves children, who have to grow up without an intact home. So, Jolene, are you still having sex with some guy?”

Jolene responded, “Well, I still live with my boyfriend.”

The counselor replied, “Are you still having sex with the guy that you don’t know why you’re not marrying?”

Jolene said, “Yes.”

The counselor replied, “So you’re risking making more kids.”

Jolene said, “I’m on birth control.”

The counselor replied, “No birth control method works all of the time. All methods have a failure rate. So, you’re still risking making more kids, without a dad in the home and without marriage. Let me ask you, at what point is your upbringing no longer an excuse for your current behavior, which you are doing as an adult with the responsibility for children?”

Jolene responded, “We want to be together, but, I don’t know why we haven’t gotten married. Marriage just hasn’t come up, I guess. I’m still young, and I don’t want to marry the wrong guy.”

The counselor responded, “You don’t want to marry the wrong guy, but you don’t mind taking a guy whom you don’t know is the right guy or the wrong guy and making him the father of your children. He’s not good enough for you, but it is okay to impose him on your kids. While you’re not sure that he is the right guy, you know that he’s the right guy to make babies with. Does that really make sense to you?”

Jolene responded, “No, it doesn’t make any sense. I just...”

“Then stop having sex”, the counselor exclaimed, cutting Jolene off. “You have to stop having sex with him or anybody else. You have to stop making babies with men whom you don’t know are good enough for you. If they aren’t good enough for you, what makes them good enough to be the dad of another human being, one who has no choice? Do you think about any of this, or do you just go through each day?”

“Yes”, Jolene said, “I do.”

“Well”, the counselor said, “when you think about it, what is your thought process? Tell me, please.”

Jolene replied, “There are times that I think that I just want to leave, be alone with my two kids, and honestly, I think that I never will be with anyone ever again, and just focus on my two babies, but we’re in a serious relationship, and we’re trying to make things work.”

“You’re not in a serious relationship”, the counselor replied, “A serious relationship is called marriage. You’re in a shack-up relationship, having sex out of wedlock. The reason people avoid marrying is to avoid the commitment of a serious relationship. You are not in a serious relationship, by definition. And, as I said before, I really don’t mind if you do this to yourself. You’re an adult woman, and if you want to live your life foolishly, I don’t lose sleep over it. But, you have two kids, with two different fathers, and you have no security, no marriage, no intact family.”

“Well”, Jolene replied, “they don’t have an intact family, but they have their mom.”

“That’s not enough”, the counselor replied, “No matter how good a mom you are, it’s not enough. It’s selfish of you to make sure that you have whatever is it that you have in spite of what your children have lost. I would not say that that is the thinking of a good mother. A good mother is supposed to think about taking care of her kids, not taking care of herself at her kid’s expense.

Jolene, did you get anything out of this conversation except irritation?”

“I’m not irritated”, Jolene replied, “I realize that you are telling the truth. I know that I have made many mistakes.”

“That’s not the problem”, said the counselor. “We have all made mistakes. But you’re still making the same mistake. You made the same mistake when you went to bed with the guy last night. You’re planning on doing it again tonight. You are continuing to repeat the same mistake. You have two out-of-wedlock children, and you are revving up for a third, and a fourth. You shouldn’t be living with him unless he gets you a ring and the two of you go to a justice of the peace this weekend and make your relationship legal. If he won’t do that, one of the two of you should move out of that house, you should go to court, and work out visitation and child support. You should not have sex with any man, ever, unless he marries you, because you have two kids to raise that you have robbed of a home and a family, meaning a mother and a father. You have a big responsibility, and I expect you to fulfill it.”

How can Jolene continue to say that she doesn’t know why she is doing the wrong thing. How could Jolene continue to justify staying with a guy from whom she has no commitment, risking bringing more illegitimate children into the world? How could she justify living her life so incorrectly?

One simple word. Pride.

In order for Jolene to do the right thing, she first has to admit that she is wrong, and that her erroneous ways will not work. And she can’t do that because of her pride. Jolene is not the only person that thinks that the good feeling associated with sex out of wedlock is sufficient to justify committing the sin of fornication. It’s no different than being in the garden. We see things as good when God tells us that they are not, because we are too proud to yield our wills to the will of Almighty God. Yes, I know that God says that sin is wrong, but I can tell you that there is nothing wrong with sin, because I want to do it. Who is God to tell me what to do? Well,

Proverbs 16:18-20 tells us:

18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

19 Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud.

20 He who heeds the word wisely will find good, And whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he.

The scribes and Pharisees are too proud to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is their superior, although His miracles are the proof. The demon in our text was not the only demon that Jesus Christ cast out of someone. The dumb man to whom Jesus Christ gave speech was not the only person the Jesus healed miraculously. **Matthew 4:24-25** records:

24 Then [Jesus'] fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.

25 Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

Jesus' healing ministry was known to the people of the land; great multitudes followed Him from throughout the territory. But even with all of this proof and precedent, the Jewish religious leaders still maintained that Jesus was destroying the works of the devil by the power of the devil.

Pride is a terrible attribute for us to have.

Pride causes us to ignore God, and it keeps people from acknowledging that they are sinners that need to be saved. Look at how pride ultimately blinded the Jewish religious leaders. **Matthew 28:1-4, 11-15** records:

1 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.

4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

11 Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened.

12 When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers,

13 saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.'

14 And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure."

15 So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

The guards were not Christians. The guards were Roman soldiers that nothing to gain by lying about the angel's conversation and about Jesus' resurrection. The guards brought the truth to the Jewish leaders, and, after considering the ramifications of the resurrection, the Jews decided that a cover-up would be more to the point, as if you could cover up the resurrection of a man from the dead. But the Jews were too proud to acknowledge that they were wrong about Jesus working by the power of the devil, and they lost their chance at salvation because of their foolish pride. **Obadiah 3-4** tells us:

3 The pride of your heart has deceived you, You who dwell in the clefts of the rock, Whose habitation is high; You who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’

4 Though you ascend as high as the eagle, And though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down,” says the LORD.

Many are going to be lost because of foolish pride. They choose to look at the sin that saved folks commit, and then think to themselves, proudly, ‘at least I didn’t do anything as bad as that Christian did.’ Sinners rejoice whenever a minister of the gospel goes down in disgrace and is then held up to public ridicule. They fail to recognize that it is not the minister’s goodness that is going to save him, but the fact that the minister humbly admits his fault, recognizes and owns up to his sin, and calls upon God for forgiveness by the blood that Jesus Christ shed on Calvary’s Cross.

Pride will make some miss heaven. Humility will lead us through the gates. John tells us about the great multitude of those saved at the end of time, in **Revelation 7:9-10, 13-14:**

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”

14 And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

You can only wash your robe in the blood of the Lamb after you put down your foolish pride and acknowledge your sins, that your robe needs washing, and that you don’t have anything to take away the stain of sin yourself. Jesus Christ’s blood is available to wash your robe, but only the robes of those that will acknowledge their sinful nature, their evil deeds, and their need for salvation. If you are too proud to recognize how wretched you are, you will be lost, like the young woman that said “I don’t know” rather than acknowledge her sin, and the Jewish leaders that would not acknowledge that Jesus’ miracles were done by the grace and power of God.

We must choose humility to be saved. No matter how good that we have considered ourselves to be and no matter how much we may consider that we have accomplished, we must forsake pride, and we must embrace humility. Jesus paid the price, and we must be humble and recognize our lowly position in order to receive that which He has for us. We must bow in humble prayer, and acknowledge that we need the salvation which Jesus has provided for us.

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