

10-21-2018

Message: Who Is on the Lord's Side? Following Jesus in a Conflict of Kingdoms

Text: Luke 11:14-28

Introduction

- A. How many of us enjoy conflict? How many of us enjoy conflict among the nations of the world, conflict within our own nation, conflict within our workplace, conflict within our church, conflict among our extended family members, conflict within our own households, conflict within our own souls?
- B. In the final book in our Bibles, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, our once crucified, now risen, reigning, and returning Lord Jesus has peeled back the curtain for us to reveal the source of all earthly conflicts. It is a conflict between God and His Messiah versus the devil, between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world, a conflict that intensified with the coming of Jesus Messiah to earth.

Revelation 12:1 A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars;² and she was with child; ...⁴ ... And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.⁵ And **she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.**

Revelation 12:7 And **there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon.** The dragon and his angels waged war,⁸ and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.⁹ And **the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan,** who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. **(Luke 10:18 And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.")**¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and **the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come,** for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. ...¹⁷ So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to **make war with the rest of her children,** who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

- C. Recall that in Luke's gospel from 9:51 into chapter 19, Jesus's final journey to Jerusalem, our risen Christ is inviting all who read and hear to take up our crosses and follow Him to the cross. And now we see following Him requires that we follow Him into a conflict between two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and His Christ versus the kingdom of this world that lies under the power of the evil one.

1 John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and that **the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.**

- D. During World War II when Hitler's Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy were fighting western allies to gain domination over Europe and North Africa, the tiny mountainous country of Switzerland declared its neutrality in the war, and was largely spared much of the war's ravages.
- E. While no one in his/her right mind enjoys conflict, Christ wants us to understand that in the conflict between the kingdoms of God and this world, there is no Switzerland, there is no place of neutrality. The only place we can escape the ravages of eternal destruction is to trust in Christ, God's Divine Warrior, falling in behind Him and following Him by faith into the conflict, believing that all who remain united with Him will emerge victorious.

I. 11:14-19 The conflict exposed in the reactions to Jesus's miraculous exorcism and healing.

- A. During His journey, Jesus casts out a demon that had rendered a man both mute and, according to the parallel text in Matthew, blind.

Luke 11:14 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.**

Matthew 12:22 Then **a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute** was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that **the mute man spoke and saw.**

- B. The crowds were amazed, for no one could deny that the man could now instantly speak and see. No one could deny that a supernatural power had been at work. But not all amazement at Jesus was positive. There was division and skepticism over exactly whose power Jesus had employed.

- 1. 11:15 Some immediately attributed Jesus's power to the work of Beelzebul, a name of disputed origins going back to a reference to the Canaanite god, Baal, but which became for the Jews a name for "the ruler of demons," "Satan" (vs 18).

Luke 11:15 But some of them said, "**He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.**"

- 2. Some skeptics asked for a sign from heaven to prove the power was from God and not the Devil. They, like the lawyer in Luke 10, did not believe Jesus is the Lord, for their Scriptures prohibit putting the Lord to the test.

Luke 11:16 Others, **to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven.**

Deuteronomy 6:16 "**You shall not put the LORD your God to the test,** as you tested *Him* at Massah.

- 3. Why couldn't they see in the sign the true identity of Jesus? As no one lights a lamp to

hide it, God is not concealing sufficient light to reveal Jesus to the world if people's hearts are right. The problem is not one of insufficient light, but of healthy (single-hearted) eyes of the heart. So while in one respect it seems remarkable that they asked for a sign after one was just given, in reality, the heart sees what it wants to see, and if our hearts are darkened by sin, we won't want to see the truth that is in Jesus.

Luke 11:33 "No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar nor under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light.³⁴ "The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but **when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness.**

4. So pray that God would graciously open the eyes of our hearts and the hearts of others!

Ephesians 1:18 *I pray that **the eyes of your heart may be enlightened**, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,*

Acts 26:17 ... I am sending you,¹⁸ **to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God**, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

- C. Jesus knew their evil thoughts (he knows our thoughts about these very words at this very moment.), yet graciously gives further light, using two arguments to reveal the folly of attributing His power to Beelzebul, Satan.

1. No kingdom divided against itself can stand. Implied: Satan would never intentionally undo his designs. We see here that Jesus is encroaching on Satan's "kingdom." This is a clash of kingdoms.

Luke 11:17 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.

2. If casting out demons indicates being in league with the devil, where does this place Jewish exorcists?

Luke 11:19 "**And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out?** So they will be your judges.

II. 11:20-23 The significance of Jesus' miracle in the conflict of kingdoms.

- A. 11:20 Jesus's miracle was a sign, pointing to His identity as God's promised divine heir to David's throne, who would establish God's limitless kingdom over all creation for all

time, as was promised through God's prophets.

Luke 11:20 "But **if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.**

Matthew 12:28 "But if I cast out demons **by the Spirit of God**, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Isaiah 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And **the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called** Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God**, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.⁷ **There will be no end to the increase of His government** or of peace, **on the throne of David and over his kingdom**, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness **from then on and forevermore**. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Isaiah 35:3 Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble.⁴ Say to those with anxious heart, "Take courage, fear not. Behold, **your God will come** with vengeance; The recompense of God will come, but He will save you."⁵ **Then the eyes of the blind will be opened** and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.⁶ Then the lame will leap like a deer, and **the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.**

- B. 11:21-22 Because Jesus, and not Satan, did cast out the demon, because Jesus plundered what had been under Satan's strong power, Jesus is the stronger one, who will bring final defeat to Satan.

Luke 11:21 "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.

- C. 11:23 Jesus is calling out, "Who is on the Lord's side?"

Luke 11:23 "**He who is not with Me is against Me**; and **he who does not gather with Me, scatters.**

1. There is no neutrality in this fight. If we think we are standing on the sidelines, we are fighting against Jesus's filling the whole earth with His glory. Every time we sin we are like soldiers who make a choice to retreat, to let the enemy pass by our lines, to cede territory to the enemy, rather than to stand our ground and fight and advance. E.g., when we choose to give way to sinful anger rather than fighting by faith for self-control, we give the devil a place in our hearts, a place in our homes, a foothold, a beachhead from which to assault and ravage Christ's church.

Ephesians 4:26-27 BE ANGRY, AND *yet* DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger,²⁷ and **do not give the devil an opportunity** (topos = place).

2. When we do not wholeheartedly follow Jesus, we encourage others to remain detached from Him - we scatter those Christ would have us gather to Himself.

Luke 11:52 "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering."

III. 11:24-28 A warning to those blessed by divine miracles: Don't misinterpret the significance of the Lord's earthly blessings upon you.

- A. At this point in the text, Jesus begins to warn us hearers and readers to understand whose side in the conflict we are truly on, and to be careful to choose the Lord's side. The mute and blind man was truly blessed by Jesus's merciful deliverance from demon possession. But this temporal blessing does not in itself indicate to which kingdom the man belongs, whether or not he is a disciple of Jesus, whether or not he is on the Lord's side in this conflict between 2 kingdoms.

1. Removal of an earthly curse by God's mercy in itself does not insure God's eternal mercy and blessing.

Luke 11:24 "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'²⁵ "And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order."²⁶ "Then it goes and takes *along* seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

- a. Divine miracles that bring us earthly benefit are a sign of who Jesus is, but not necessarily a sign of who we are.

Matthew 5:45 ... your Father who is in heaven ... causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

- b. If Christ delivers us from the effects of sin but not from the practice of sinning, then something worse than sin's temporal, earthly consequences will happen to us. After Jesus healed an ill man lying by the pool of Bethesda, Jesus later found him and said ...

John 5:14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you."

1 John 3:5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.⁶ No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.⁷ Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;⁸ the one who

practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. **The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.**

2. Receiving earthly blessings by God's mercy in itself does not insure God's eternal mercy and blessings. A woman in the crowd compliments Jesus, but had it wrong, and Jesus graciously corrects her. He was more interested in truth for her and his hearers' sake, than in being complimented.

Luke 11:27 While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed."²⁸ **But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."**

- a. God truly favored and blessed Mary with the privilege of giving birth to the Son of God. But that by itself is not what enabled her to take hold of the blessing of eternal life. It was her faith in God by which she submitted herself to the word and will of God.

Luke 1:35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. ...³⁸ And Mary said, "**Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.**"

- b. This beatitude, like all of God's beatitudes, is a statement of fact, of who is eternally blessed by God, which serves as an invitation to all to inherit God's eternal blessing of salvation. In the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world, Mary, by faith, chose to be on the Lord's side, and for this reason, is blessed by God.

Conclusion

- A. One day Jesus will return in His Father's power and glory to judge the world in righteousness. Jesus will destroy the strong man, Satan, for Jesus is infinitely stronger, and His kingdom will replace the kingdom of this world forever.

Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "**The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.**"

- B. This conflict section of Jesus's journey to Jerusalem begs the question, "Who is on the Lord's side? Who will follow Jesus to the cross in a conflict of kingdoms, trusting that in Christ our victory is secure? Listen to Jesus, who by God's power has overcome the world, and now invites us to be overcomers by faith in Him.

1 John 5:4 For **whatever is born of God overcomes the world**; and **this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith**.

Revelation 2:7 '... **To him who overcomes**, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

Revelation 3:21 '**He who overcomes**, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.'

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; ⁷ "**He who overcomes** will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

C. Though Christ's promise of final victory, we can even now in the midst of the conflict, give thanks to God.

1 Corinthians 15:57 **thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**.

Closing Prayer (made plural):

Psalm 119

¹²⁴ Lord, Deal with Your servants according to Your covenant-keeping love, and teach us Your statutes.

¹²⁵ We are Your servants; give us understanding, that we may know Your testimonies.

¹²⁹ Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore our souls observe them.

¹³⁰ The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

¹³² Turn to us and be gracious to us, the way You do with those who love Your name.

¹³³ Establish our footsteps in Your word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over us.
In Jesus' Name we come to you. Amen.