**BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD AND OBEY IT**

Luke 11:14-28 (K. V.: 11:28)

**“He replied, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’”**

Last week, we learned that prayer is all about relationship. We also learned to whom to pray, for what to pray, and how to pray through Shep. Rob’s wonderful message. We have our Heavenly Father to pray to, God’s glory and our daily needs to pray for and a persistent friend to pray like. Today, we switch our mental gear and think about the spiritual battle that is still going on. What happens when we are not in the side of Jesus? What happens when we are? We need the stronger man to rescue us and we ourselves should be with him all the time. May God fill our heart with Jesus and His word so as to be blessed and victorious.

1. **By the Finger of God (11:14-22)**

Look at verse 14a. Jesus was doing God’s work as he was driving out a demon that was mute. One of the gifts we have received from God is our ability to speak and communicate. We establish our relationship with God and with each other through this. But the mute demon blocked communication and thus cut off any chance of building a relationship. Sometimes, spiritual mutism comes through this demon. Other times, political mutism comes like that in North Korea. We should pray for freedom of speech and good communication. When Jesus drove out the mute demon, the man could finally speak. This was clearly the evidence of the life-giving work of God as the Prophet Isaiah foretold (Isa 35:6), “ … the lame leap like a deer and the mute tongue shout for joy.” Remembering this prophecy, the crowd should have received Jesus as their Messiah. Yet, what were their responses? Some said Jesus drove out a demon by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons. Others asked for a sign from heaven. The former was falsifying the work of God while the latter, minimizing its effect.

Surely, driving out demons, or exorcism, has been a topic of interests for the West and the East alike because many people have been tormented by demons. In our Friday Meeting, one man of God pointed out that in the East, like Japan, driving out a demon by another demon, is quite a popular concept, such as “PokéMons.” Some believe there are good demons or gifted demons who bestow good things on us as certain heavy metal bands claim their music was inspired by those demons. So, they titled their song after the demons, “Demon Dreams.” This is, however, not true. It is based on their utter spiritual ignorance.

Look at verse 17a. Jesus knew about their ignorant thoughts. For one, Jesus did not have to respond to their such a nonsensical remark. Nevertheless, our Lord was gracious enough to reveal the contradiction in their claim so that they might come back to their senses and possibly repent and accept him later. Look at verse 17b. “‘Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall.’” This is the truth that is applicable to anyone, anywhere and anytime. Even President Lincoln quoted it at the time of the American Civil War. Clearly, this statement contracts the claim that they made against Jesus. Demons are much smarter than we think. They know if they are against each other, their gathering would not stand. So, they co-work together well, never fight each other, and are very much organized under their master, Satan, just like in a movie, the stormtroopers are well-organized and loyal to their master, the archvillain, Darth Vader.

Accordingly, we can know for sure that Jesus’ power does not come from demons, like Beelzebul. Instead, the finger of God the Almighty empowered Jesus. It is just like at the time of the Ten Plagues, at some point, the Egyptian magicians could not but acknowledge the finger of God when they were unable to emulate His plague anymore. The finger of God also announces His message of judgment to the unrighteous. At the time of Daniel, when one of the Babylonian kings, Belshazzar, abused the utensils of the temple of Israel for his drinking, the finger of God appeared on the wall and wrote the message of judgment to him (Dan 5:5). Lastly, the finger of God inscribes His words for us. Moses received the two tablets whose inscription was done by the finger of God (Ex 31:18). The finger of God still inscribes His words onto our heart tablets. Surely, this tells us who Jesus is and what kind of ministry he serves. He is the special force agent of the kingdom of God empowered by the finger of God and engaging the spiritual warfare.

To enlighten the crowd regarding the spiritual warfare, Jesus shows another example between him and the demonic entity. Look at verses 21, 22. “‘When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder.’” Here, who is “the strong man” and “the stronger man,” respectively? Satan is the strong man and is in complete control of his house where his prized possessions are safe. We, his possessions, are under this strong Satan’s power, and no one is exempt from his grip. Listen to what Apostle Paul has to say about his being under this grip through the law in the Romans. “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? (Ro 7:24)” But Jesus is the stronger man than Satan is and overthrows him. In fact, he is the strongest man who takes away the armor in which Satan trusted through his death and resurrection. Then, he divides up his plunder, so that we might be nicely organized into different parts of his body, which is, the church. Hence, one is assigned to DuPage UBF while another, Chicago UBF. This parable truly teaches us that the kingdom of God is not simply a matter of helpful teachings but to fight tooth and nail for overcoming Satan through Jesus’ power.

One young man had a traumatic experience about his life when he witnessed his parents were divorced. So, he lost the meaning of his life and decided not to live diligently. He began to give up things like doing homework. In fact, he never did any homework for his entire middle school and high school. As a result, he became almost illiterate. Somehow, however, he was accepted to a community college. But again, he did not do his homework, and was failing in his college. He then met his 1:1 Bible teacher and began Genesis study. Through Genesis, he found the new meaning of life in the Creator God. Instead of wandering around in idleness, he began to see his life from God’s sovereignty and providence. He no longer suffered from meaninglessness and was resolved to live for the glory of God. He established a house church and began a new, diligent life for God. Believe or not, I was saved from a similar situation as his. We may be different from his case. But, we pray that God empower each of us through his finger so that we live a new life that glorifies Him!

1. **Blessed Are Those Who Hear and Obey the Word of God (23-28)**

Look at verse 23. “‘Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.’” This is Jesus’ stern warning that teaches us the significance of having a right attitude toward him. There is no “no-man’s land,” in the spiritual world. Either you are with Jesus or not. We better be with Jesus. Otherwise, we will be standing against him and scattered. In verses 24-26, Jesus describes what happens to the one who once received his healing mercy but is not with him. Note the nature and activity of an impure spirit. It always tries to find a resting place in a human soul. In the parable, this particular spirit was kicked out of his former house (possibly by Jesus), and was looking for a new house. But the spirit could not find one. Maybe, there was a housing market boom with the lowest interest rate ever in human souls. Anyway, after several unsuccessful house hunting, the spirit got tired, began to miss his old house, and desired to return to it. When it arrived, it found that the house swept clean and put in order. It was ready to move in. Then, it went and took seven other roommates to move in together. So, the final condition of that person would be worse than the first. One take-away lesson from the illustration is that the houses should not stay empty but be occupied after the clean-out. Otherwise, the worse thing can happen. In Chicago, when there was the subprime mortgage crisis, there was a research study regarding the relationship between the number of empty houses versus the crime rates. Surprisingly, the study discovered that there is a strong correlation between the two. The emptier houses, the more crimes. When we are occupied with doing the good works, there is no room for impure spirits to come and stay.

There is another way to fill our empty houses.

Look at verse 27. A woman in the crowd expressed her excitement about Jesus’ teaching by saying that his mother who gave him birth and nursing is blessed. Maybe she was a little jealous and envious of Mary who had such a wonderful child. Or by blessing Jesus’ mother, she wanted to remind everybody else of what privilege and special position his family has. It is like when your child wins a gold medal in the Olympics, you as his/her parent is honored and even TV-interviewed for your good upbringing. It is the time of sharing the blessing. What did Jesus teach her about who is truly blessed? Look at verse 28. “He replied, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’” True blessedness comes when we hear the word of God and obey it. In the KJV version, “obey it” is replaced with “keep it.” So, we can also safely say that this is another way of filling our empty houses, that is, our soul. We keep the word of God instead of letting it go.

In this day and age, when everything is demanding our slightest attention possible, our houses can be easily filled with the worldly things. We are driven not by the finger of God but by the finger of men as we navigate our laptops, smartphones, and even TVs using our fingertips. How can we fill our houses with the word of God again? We empty our houses first by sweeping clean and putting in order. Then we fill our houses with God’s word. At least once a week. Savor the depth of the word of God with no pre-occupied heart as we listen to the sermon. Sing hymns at the top of your lungs to fill your heart with the wonderful lyrics. Have genuine fellowship with your brothers and sisters to experience holy love. In that way, we are truly blessed and victorious.

In conclusion, we learned that Jesus’ work is done by the finger of God. He is the strongest man who overthrows Satan and rescues us from his grip. When we are not with this Jesus, we are not in the middle ground, but are against him. We should fill our empty heart with him and His words so as not to be occupied with impure spirits but to be truly blessed and victorious.