

means the person from where he was cast out. “When it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first.” When the evil spirit comes back to see this person, he seems to be well and healthy, but still there is void inside. He looks great outside, but there is still no Jesus in him. Thus, the evil spirit says, “Great. Let’s settle here and call my friends for party.” This is the very reason why our church mission must first serve people spiritually, then physically. Helping someone physically without helping him spiritually may only help him to be well and healthy outside. But, if there is no lordship of Jesus in him, eventually his last state will become worse than before.

In my life, I have personally driven out evil spirits from people a couple of times, and I will not share any details for many obvious reasons. But, from my experience, I learned a couple of things. First, it is vitally important that we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. In one incident, during the process of driving out an evil spirit, I brought the person to Jesus Christ, and when Jesus is the Lord, everything changed. That person was able to set free from all bondages, received power and strength, and experienced the love of God powerfully. As mentioned earlier, it’s about battles between the two kingdoms, and in the kingdom of God Jesus reigns and governs. Lastly, our lives are constant and ongoing battlegrounds between Jesus and devil. There is this big battle we won at Jesus’ cross, but there are these little battles, constant and ongoing, in every corner of our lives. For this reason, we have to be on guard all the time. We don’t need to be afraid of them, but we need to watch out and be on guard. Ephesians 4:27 says, “Do not make room for the devil.” Satan always look for a foothold, like one looks for a foothold at the beginning of each battle. There are numerous examples in the Bible where people gave the devil a foothold and fail greatly. The first king of Israel, the king Saul wanted to please the crowd rather than God. Because of this, he was denounced from a king, became demon-possessed and driven crazy. Satan entered into Judas through his love for money (Luke 22:3-6). One man in Corinthian church was handed to Satan for his sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:5).

You have to allow the kingdom of God to be established, not in your church and religious area of life, but all areas of life. The two kingdoms for their grounds, not only in your church life, but also in your marriage and family life, your finance, your career and workplace, your relationships and every little corner of your life. And when you allow Jesus to be your Lord and Mater and let his Holy Spirit to lead you in all areas of your life, he will bring victory over and over again through his power he demonstrated on the cross. May his kingdom come, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**OAKRIDGE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**APRIL 26, 2015**

**TWO KINGDOMS**

Matthew 12:22-32,43-45

Rev. John Park

Do demons exist? Some of you may think, “It’s already hard enough to believe in God, and now I have to believe there are demons?” Others may look around the world and think, “Yup, there must be demons.” Do demons exist? The answer is yes, because Jesus also believed in the existence of demons. Some of you may then ask, “How come we don’t see them around?” Well, we see them everywhere, but they manifest in different forms and different ways to us. Exorcism was a common practice in the early church and is still common in many churches around the world, just not common in Europe and North America.

The reaction the Pharisees showed in today’s reading would be something you would expect to see with many people living in the Western culture. They said, “That looks demonic; it must be demons that doing all these things.” Verse 24: “But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, that this fellow casts out the demons.” Then, Jesus points out how nonsense this accusation is. Somehow you acknowledge that demons exist and yet you do not approve the practice of casting out demons? You either believe there is the spiritual realm in this world and the existence of demons or you don’t.

Jesus then gives a parable. Verse 26: “If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?” Not that he’s concerned about the well being of Satan’s kingdom, but he is making a point that Satan obviously would not do such a thing; it’s simply suicidal. Then he says, “If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges” (vs. 27). There were obviously some Jewish priests who were also practicing exorcism (c.f. Acts 19:13-14), and thus they are contradicting themselves; they do not say anything against their own people’s exorcism, but only against Jesus, because of their jealousy. So, by their own actions, they are proven wrong.

Then, his parable begins to focus on this one theme, the kingdom of God. Jesus’ message has always been about the kingdom of God. When he began his ministry, he said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (Mark 1:15). His teachings and parables are

all centered around the kingdom of God. Even after his resurrection, Acts records, “After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). The Apostles also taught about the kingdom of God. Acts 28:30-31: “Paul lived there two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.” Then, Jesus says in verse 28: “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you.” In other words, “the manifestation of power of the Holy Spirit in the practice of exorcism is to you the sign to the arrival of the kingdom of God. And what did I tell you when the kingdom of God is at hand? Didn’t I tell you to repent and believe in the good news?”

There are two kingdoms presented here in Jesus’ parable as well as throughout the Bible: the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. A theologian St. Augustine wrote a book, called ‘City of God,’ arguing that God is raising, in all aspects of our society, this army called the City of God to fight against the City of Devil. And here, Jesus is talking about how the war is going to happen. Verse 29: “How can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property, without first tying up the strong man? Then indeed the house can be plundered.” Here, the strong man is Satan. In other words, Jesus is saying, “this kingdom of God will not sit and make peace with this kingdom of Satan. It will raise a war against the kingdom of Satan and will invade in. And in order to conquer the kingdom of Satan, it will go after its king and strong man, Satan.” Here, to ‘plunder his property’ means to take its lordship, and to ‘tie up the strong man’ means to cast out demons. Colossians 1:13 says, “God has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” In other words, in a smaller scale, it’s about forgiveness of our sins, but in a bigger scale, it’s about the transferring our citizenship from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of Jesus.

In this kingdom, God appointed his Son as the king. This was promised in the Old Testament; God says to the king David in 2 Samuel 7:12-14: “I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.” Then Jesus says, “All things have been handed over to me by my Father” (Matthew 11:27). John 3:35 also says, “The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands.” In

the kingdom of God, everything revolves around the person of Jesus Christ. This is why it’s so crucial to have Jesus as our Lord and Saviour in our lives.

In this kingdom of God, Jesus reigns and governs by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is why Jesus says “If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you” (vs. 28). In John’s gospel Jesus says, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13-14). In other words, the work of the Holy Spirit will declare that Jesus is the Lord. This is why Jesus says to his disciples, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us power and authority to be the Kingdom of God ambassador to wherever we go.

The important issue is not simply “Do you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour?”, but also “Do you want to live in his kingdom and be governed and led by the Holy Spirit?” You cannot say yes to the first question and say no to the second question, because the first question implies the second question. This is why Jesus says, “It’s okay to deny me, but denying the Spirit cannot be forgiven.” For instance, one may misunderstand the person of Jesus and have not yet come to receive him as his Lord and Saviour. This person, when later enlightened, may repent and receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour. But, there are people who never want to turn away from sinful lives and darkness, but reject being governed and led by the Holy Spirit. For instance, when the Israelites came out from Egypt, God continued to assure them that they will inherit the land of Canaan, but when they rejected going into the Promised Land after hearing bad reports from spies, God said, “Not one of these – not one of this evil generation – shall see the good land that I swore to give to your ancestors” (Deut. 1:34). Jesus also warns of hardening of our hearts from being willing to repent from darkness and to move into his kingdom and be led by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Then in verses 43-45, Jesus continues his parable and focuses on this evil spirit that has been driven out. “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but it finds none.” Often, in the Bible, there is a strong connection between water and evil or death (c.f. Mark 5:13, Rev. 13:1, 20:13, 21:1). This evil spirit cannot find water to dwell. So verse 44: “Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’” Here, he