

## Luke 11:14-28

It was Pilate who asked the important question: 'What is truth?' In today's world, so many people don't see truth as black and white – it's more like forty shades of grey. What is true for me is not necessarily true for you, it's all relative – there is no such thing today as 'absolute' truth.

Yet, when I listen to the message of Jesus, it's so very different – he referred to himself in John 14 as 'the truth' ... when I read the Bible, again, it's hugely challenging – it's been described as 'the word of truth'. The Holy Spirit is named as 'the Spirit of truth'.

That's where Jesus hits the nail on the head when he says in verse 23 that there are only two groups of people in the world – those who are with him and on his side and those who are against him and on the devil's side; those who are in the kingdom of light and those who are in the kingdom of darkness – that's it, pure and simple.

In the war between God and Satan, between heaven and hell, between good and evil, between truth and error, no one is neutral. You can't sit on the fence. There is no third way!

You either believe what he says about himself – or you reject all that he says and does. Either Jesus was a blasphemer, or those who reject him are. That's tough talk, but that's the bottom line. And that is what is at the heart of this section here in Luke 11 ...

The man that we read about in verse 14 was in a horrendously bad way, he was in a sad and sorry state. He was dumb – he couldn't say anything, he

couldn't pray; and to make matters worse, the poor soul was demon possessed. He was virtually a prisoner in his own body, and it's all because of Satan.

Jesus healed the afflicted man and he delivered him from the bondage of the evil spirit – the man starts talking for the first time in ages; the fact is, Jesus did what they were not able to do! Jesus is stronger than any demon.

That is one of the shortest miracle stories you'll read of in the Bible. The people were stunned with all that the Lord did for this man. That said, not everyone was best pleased!

I tell you, some of these guys have a right nerve; I can hardly believe their audacity. They are cynical, they are sceptical, they are antagonistic. They are slanderous and scandalous in what they say.

They raised the stakes when they levelled the accusation against Jesus in verse 15 that the miracle was done by the power of Satan, and not by the power of God. All I can say is, rather than me to point the finger like that at Jesus!

This is serious stuff, folks! For them to say what they did was to drag the name and power of Jesus through the filthiest gutter. This is depravity at its worst. This was vulgar and vile.

They called the highest and most holy one the lowest and most evil; they said the one who was most pure is the most sinful; they labelled God as the devil and truth incarnate is seen as a liar; they branded the Son of God a servant of Satan. These

guys are guilty of blasphemy. They turn their back on the truth!

Jesus heard what they said and he also knew what was going on in their mind. He read them like a book. His response in verse 17 on is immediate, he doesn't miss them and hit the wall. His answer is sharp and devastating. What they said was daft, it was illogical, it made absolutely no sense.

The brutal truth is: if Jesus was bankrolled by the devil, then Satan's kingdom would be divided against itself, it would be in tatters and ruins. I think most of us realise, this is far from the case! The reality is, the devil is very much in business; he's alive and kicking; the chances of him pressing the self-destruct button are not that high; in fact, it's fairly slim!

It's worth noting that Jesus isn't overly concerned about winning an argument, he's in the business of winning lives. So far, he's done two things: one, we've seen that blasphemy against Jesus smacks of stupidity – it's totally irrational;

and, two, it lacks integrity. They were using double standards – they had one set of criteria for their guys and a different set for Jesus. That's what Jesus means when he says what he does in verse 19. (you see evidence of that same attitude in Acts 19:13-16 where it talks about the seven sons of Sceva.)

Jesus drives his point home into people's hearts when he tells them a vivid illustration, and that's what we have in verses 20-23. This underlines the point that blasphemy against Jesus is devoid of all spirituality.

The armed 'strong man' in verse 21 is the devil, he's the one who stakes his claim in your life and mine. The 'someone stronger' in verse 22 is Jesus for he gets the better of the strong man when he wrestles him to the ground and overpowers him – we read in 1 John 3:8 that only Jesus can destroy the works of the devil – when all is done and dusted, Jesus ends up distributing the spoils.

The punchline is found in verse 23 where Jesus says: 'he who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.' In other words, you can't run with the foxes and hunt with the hounds. You're either for him, or against him! When it comes to Jesus Christ, there is no middle road!

Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord ... for you and me, it's make up your mind time! We either receive him, or we reject him.

The final illustration in verses 24-26 is a resounding challenge to all of us. Jesus says, you can turn over a new leaf, but if you haven't experienced a new life, then you're asking for trouble. He says, your next encounter with the devil will be worse than the original one!

You see, the man's a fool if he thinks he can play with fire; that man ends up very badly burned! In a word, don't mess around with the devil, don't trifle with demons! Right here, Jesus contrasts reformation with transformation.

On the face of it, this guy was a very religious man – he's someone who has cleaned up his life, he's got his act together and ditched a lot of dodgy and dirty stuff. In the bad ol' days, he was under

the sway of a demon who had taken up residence in his life.

He's obviously done something to turn his life around – the chances are, that's why the demon left him, you have that in verse 24. Jesus gives us some idea of what the demon does, when he says: 'it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.'

You see, a demon is a spirit being, it's an evil spirit, it's not flesh and blood – because of that, they don't wander around aimlessly in a desert in need of water – they never go thirsty! This is Jesus using picture-speak so that we can understand a bit more about them. The fact is, demons do their work in this world through people – the demon in Luke 11 isn't in a person, so it's in a barren place! After a while it starts looking for someone else to invade and inhabit and it doesn't find anyone. So it swings back to where it was before; for we read, it says: 'I will return to the house I left.' It's back to the same man!

There's an interesting phrase used here when it talks about the demon going to the 'house' he left – this suggests the man wasn't only influenced now and again by the demon, but that the demon actually lived in him! He was demon possessed; the demon was running his life and ruining his life! The man may have had the best of intentions, the desire to break free and live a good life, to be a decent neighbour in the community, to sort out his morals, etc. but ... in his own strength, he just couldn't do it!

There was a spiritual vacuum in his life – and this time around, not only did the one demon return,

he brought another seven with him – they were even more evil ... the end result: things have gone from bad to worse for this man! Jesus spells it out in verse 26 with a chilling analysis: 'and the final condition of that man is worse than the first.'

Yes, you can turn over a new leaf, but it doesn't last – sooner or later, things will take a downward spiral and you'll end up worse off than before. To me, that's a salutary lesson for people to take on board.

The final two verses in our study point us in the direction of transformation ... for we read in verse 27: 'As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you."'

That was an old proverb and it implies that the woman was open to believing that Jesus was the Messiah. She saw something different in him and about him. What she said was absolutely right, it was correct, but it wasn't complete – it went so far, but not far enough!

That's when Jesus expanded on her comment in verse 28, and said: 'Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it.' In other words, it's one thing hearing the word of God, you need to put it into practice – you need to live it out from the heart. Being sincere isn't enough – saying the right things isn't enough.

And that gets to the nub of all that's happening in this section of Luke 11 ... there's no point in turning over a new leaf, you need a new life; and that only comes when we turn our lives over to him, he transforms us and rules within us. Then we are blessed beyond measure.

One lesson is: Jesus is stronger than Satan and sin  
– and, ultimately, Satan to Jesus must bow! One  
more: when it comes to Jesus, we are either for

him or against him – the question is: on which  
side are you?