No Middle Ground

Luke · Luke 11:14-20; Luke 11:21-26; Luke 11:27-28; Luke 11:29-32; Luke 11:33-36

AT A GLANCE

In this installment of the church's ongoing study through Luke, Dan opens Luke 11:14-36, where Jesus answers accusers and sign-seekers alike by declaring that his exorcisms mark a turning point: Satan's dominion is crumbling and God's kingdom is advancing. From that claim Jesus presses one unavoidable question—not what jersey you wear, but where your allegiance lies—insisting there is no neutral space between his kingdom and the enemy's, only the daily choice to say yes to him.

- Every miracle Jesus performs is proof that Satan's rule is ending and God's kingdom is already expanding into the world.
- There is no neutral space between the two kingdoms; refusing to choose Jesus is itself a choice against him.
- True blessedness is not inherited privilege but hearing God's word and keeping it, moment by moment allegiance to Christ.

> *"Whoever is not with me is against me and whoever does not gather with me scatters."*

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

Luke 11:14-20 — [14]One time Jesus was sending a demon out of a man who could not talk. When the demon came out, the man was able to speak. The crowds were amazed. [15]But some of the people said, "He uses the power of Satan to force demons out of people. Satan is the ruler of demons." [16]Some others there wanted to test Jesus. They asked him to do a miracle as a sign from God. [17]But he knew what they were thinking. So he said to them, "Every kingdom that fights against itself will be destroyed. And a family that fights against itself will break apart. [18]So if Satan is fighting against himself, how will his kingdom survive? You say that I use the power of Satan to force out demons. [19]But if I use Satan's power to force out demons, then what power do your people use when they force out demons? So your own people will prove that you are wrong. [20]But I use the power of God to force out demons. This shows that God's kingdom has now come to you." (ERV)

Luke 11:21-26 — [21]“When a strong man with many weapons guards his own house, the things in his house are safe. [22]But suppose a stronger man comes and defeats him. The stronger man will take away the weapons that the first man trusted to keep his house safe. Then the stronger man will do what he wants with the other man’s things. [23]Whoever is not with me is against me. And anyone who does not work with me is working against me. [24]When an evil spirit comes out of someone, it travels through dry places, looking for a place to rest. But it finds no place to rest. So it says, ‘I will go back to the home I left.’ [25]When it comes back, it finds that home all neat and clean. [26]Then the evil spirit goes out and brings back seven other spirits more evil than itself. They all go and live there, and that person has even more trouble than before.” (ERV)

Luke 11:27-28 — [27]As Jesus was saying these things, a woman with the people there called out to him, “Blessings from God belong to the woman who gave birth to you and fed you!” [28]But Jesus said, “The people who hear the teaching of God and obey it—they are the ones who have God’s blessing.” (ERV)

Luke 11:29-32 — [29]The crowd grew larger and larger. Jesus said, “The people who live today are evil. They ask for a miracle as a sign from God. But no miracle will be done to prove anything to them. The only sign will be the miracle that happened to Jonah. [30]Jonah was a sign for those who lived in Nineveh. It is the same with the Son of Man. He will be a sign for the people of this time. [31]On the judgment day, you people who live now will be compared with the queen of the South, and she will be a witness who shows how guilty you are. Why do I say this? Because she traveled from far, far away to listen to Solomon’s wise teaching. And I tell you that someone greater than Solomon is right here, but you won’t listen! [32]On the judgment day, you people who live now will also be compared with the people from Nineveh, and they will be witnesses who show how guilty you are. I say this because when Jonah preached to those people, they changed their hearts and lives. And you are listening to someone greater than Jonah, but you refuse to change!” (ERV)

Luke 11:33-36 — [33]“No one takes a light and puts it under a bowl or hides it. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so that the people who come in can see. [34]The only source of light for the body is the eye. When you look at people and want to help them, you are full of light. But when you look at people in a selfish way, you are full of darkness. [35]So be careful! Don’t let the light in you become darkness. [36]If you are full of light, and there is no part of you that is dark, then you will be all bright, as though you have the light of a lamp shining on you.” (ERV)

The argument

A Divided Kingdom Cannot Stand — the accusation against Jesus collapses under its own logic

Dan traces Jesus' first move against the charge that he casts out demons by Satan's power: a simple military analogy. A kingdom that fights itself has no strategy. From there Jesus makes the larger claim: 'if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.' Dan reads this as more than a defense—it names a hinge point in redemptive history. Using his own image of a foreclosure notice, he argues each exorcism announces that the world has come under new ownership, even while the old tenant, Satan,

has not yet fully vacated.

> **Insight —** *Miracles function as evidence that God's reign is already displacing evil's grip, not proof that evil has vanished.*

No Middle Ground Between the Two Kingdoms — the strong man overpowered, and the impossibility of neutral space

Jesus pictures Satan as a strong man guarding his house until a stronger man plunders him—Jesus himself. From there Dan lands on the sermon's center: 'Whoever is not with me is against me and whoever does not gather with me scatters.' He presses that this is description, not merely command—Jesus 'is not giving a command… he's just describing reality.' You cannot serve two masters; there is no 'Jesus and.' The image of the unclean spirit returning with seven worse spirits shows why: an empty, neutral space doesn't stay empty. It gets filled by something stronger and worse.

> **Insight —** *Neutrality toward Christ is not a stable resting place; refusing full allegiance leaves room for a deeper bondage.*

Blessedness Redefined as Hearing and Keeping the Word

When a woman in the crowd blesses Jesus' mother for the honor of bearing him, Jesus redirects the category of blessing entirely: 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.' Dan reads this as Jesus dismantling a flourishing life built on pedigree, family success, or the best future for one's children. The good life, in Jesus' terms, is not circumstantial but responsive—measured by whether a person actually listens to him and obeys.

> **Insight —** *Flourishing is not what you were born into but whether you hear and obey what God has said.*

The Verdict Belongs to Outsiders Who Already Believed — the sign-seekers are condemned by those who needed no sign

To the crowd demanding proof, Jesus refuses another sign and instead recalls the Queen of the South traveling for Solomon's wisdom and Nineveh repenting at Jonah's preaching—outsiders who responded to far less evidence than this generation had already received. Dan notes Jesus is not offering a future sign but pointing at what has already happened: 'I've been teaching, I've been doing miracles… my life is a sign. What else could you be looking for?' Those who thought themselves inside the people of God are shown to be outside because they withheld belief despite the evidence.

> **Insight —** *Demanding more proof while ignoring the evidence already given is itself a form of allegiance to unbelief.*

Light and Darkness as the Final Diagnostic of Allegiance

Jesus closes with the eye as a lamp letting light in or out: 'be careful, lest the light in you be darkness.' Dan explains that those who reject Jesus are described as wholly dark, not partly—because none of his light has been let in—while those who receive him become 'wholly bright.' The image ties back to the sermon's binary: there is no dim, partial glow available. What a person lets in through the eye determines whether their whole life radiates or conceals God.

> **Insight —** *What you let in determines what you give off; there is no partial illumination in the life given to Christ.*

Cross-references

- Genesis 3 — cited as the beginning of Satan's ongoing dominion over the earth
- Luke 16:13 — mentioned as the later Lukan statement that no servant can serve two masters

DEVOTIONAL

A foreclosure sign on a house does not mean the old tenant has left, or that the rooms have been swept and made ready. It only means the deed has changed hands. That is the picture Dan hands us for the whole world under Jesus: still occupied by darkness in places, still bearing the marks of the old owner, but no longer his by right. The papers have been signed. The strong man has been overpowered. What unsettles is not the cosmic claim but the personal one folded inside it. Jesus does not ask which kingdom you'd prefer in the abstract. He asks where your allegiance actually is—today, in this decision, in this small transaction of trust or fear. The unclean spirit finding the house swept but empty is a warning against a particular kind of comfort: the illusion that neutrality is safe, that an unoccupied heart simply stays unoccupied. It doesn't. Something moves in. So the invitation is not once but daily, hourly, in the moment you don't know what to do and don't know who to look to. Not a jersey worn while playing for another team, not Jesus-and-career, Jesus-and-comfort, Jesus-and-the-life-you-always-wanted, but Jesus alone, chosen again in the particular five minutes you are actually living. The light does not ask for a lifetime commitment made once and filed away. It asks only whether, right now, you will let it in.

Reflection

- Where in your life right now are you trying to live as a "Jesus and" person rather than fully choosing him?
- What decision this week will actually reveal, not just declare, where your allegiance lies?
- What would it look like for you to reaffirm your allegiance to Jesus in this specific hour rather than in general?

Closing prayer

Lord, in this place we want to open our hearts to you. For those of us with a resounding yes right now, give us the openness and courage to say yes to you again. For those of us who feel hesitant, comfortable being Jesus-and people, shine your light into our lives so we become not partly but fully bright. And for anyone who has yet to place their faith in you, show them your goodness, your truth, and your beauty. Compel us to say yes to you. We take one small step forward and give you our allegiance here, in this space.

FORMATION

One thing to remember

Allegiance to Jesus is not a decision filed away once—it is chosen again in this hour, this decision, this ordinary moment.

This week

This week, in one small decision about money, work, or a hard moment, pause and say to Jesus in prayer, 'I choose you here,' rather than assuming you can stay neutral. Let that moment send you back to his word for what to do next.

Return to **Luke 11:23**