

Lent III

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[0 : 00] In our gospel text of Luke chapter 11, our Lord teaches us that there can be no neutrality when it comes to our Christian faith.

! This is made explicit in those words that we heard this morning from Luke chapter 11, verse 23, where our Lord says, he who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

Our gospel text begins with Jesus healing a man who could not speak, a man that was mute. The people marveled at this great miracle, but some accused him of performing miracles by the power of Satan, Beelzebub.

So Jesus tells a story about a demon who had been cast out of a man, and this man is likened to a house. The house had been swept and cleansed, and the evil spirit departed and left the man. But after a while, the spirit returned in vengeance with seven other spirits. Why? Because the house had not been occupied.

[1 : 17] It had been left vacant. You see, Jesus came to bring life and order on earth as it is in heaven. He came rescuing the world from sin, death, and the devil.

But many live as though nothing at all has happened. They refused the kingdom of God for the desires of this life, which brings about their own destruction.

Jesus came first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And now he is calling all people from all nations to gather with him into his kingdom.

But in rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, people are like that unoccupied house in our story this morning. They are refusing to occupy the kingdom of God for the crumbling kingdom of this world that is controlled by Satan and the demonic.

Our gospel reading is a sobering reminder for all of us. You see, we who have been baptized into Christ are called to seek first the kingdom of God in all that we do.

[2 : 33] We are called to walk and to live by the word of God, not according to the spirit of our age.

We have been called to follow our Savior and our King. Neutrality, therefore, is not an option for the Christian. We cannot live with one foot in the kingdom of God and one foot in the wicked kingdom of this world.

Our Lord says we are either all in or we are out. We either reside in the kingdom of God or we don't. If we are not following the way of our King, then we are allowing the demonic realm to have full access to our hearts and minds.

The Lord does not tolerate being lukewarm. There is no such thing as being a carnal Christian.

Most of you probably remember what Jesus said to the church in Revelation chapter 3, the church to Laodicea.

Our Lord said he was going to spew out of his mouth this church because they were neither hot nor cold. In other words, they were pretending to be followers of Christ while they really desired to have the best of both worlds.

[4 : 04] Such indifference to the faith is what our Lord is warning all of us about this morning. After our Lord tells this sobering story and parable, he then hears the cry of a woman who yells, Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breast which nursed you.

And our Lord replies, Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it. And here lies the key to those who desire to gather with Christ in his kingdom.

It's not rocket science. It's not some hidden mystery that we must discover. It's simply hearing the word of God and seeking to keep it or to practice the word of God.

You see, it's a matter of allegiance. Will we hear the word of God and follow our Lord by seeking to occupy his kingdom? Or are we desiring to fit into this world by accommodating to its beliefs and

values?

Now, we must admit at this point that we all struggle with keeping the word of God. As a matter of fact, we fail from time to time.

[5 : 32] But the difference is that those who desire the kingdom of God are people who confess their sins. Whereas those who want to have one foot in the church and one foot in the selfish realm of the demonic refuse to acknowledge their sin and admit that they are wrong.

They refuse to turn away from evil. They view the concept of sin as some antiquated and outdated belief that is no longer relevant for enlightened people like us today.

Therefore, the half-hearted religious crowd refuses to bow the knee to God. While chasing after the desires and the approval of this sinful world, bowing the knee to the God of this age.

And there we have it. The people who long to gather with Christ in his kingdom seek to hear the word of God and respond to it in faith.

Those who want Christianity without the fruits of repentance are hollow inside. Rejecting the Holy Spirit, thereby allowing the demonic full access to manipulate and to reign.

[6 : 55] So the message is very simple this morning. Christ has done all the work. He has cleansed the world of sin by his perfect obedience to the word of God.

By his passion, cross, his resurrection. He has destroyed death and the devil and ushered in his kingdom. And he wants us to follow him by listening to his word and by seeking to do what he says. And when we fail, and we all will, he wants us to own it. To confess it. To seek to turn away from our sin.

Receiving his absolution and forgiveness, which he abundantly showers upon us. So that we occupy his house, his kingdom.

Where he dwells with us and we in him. Therefore, dear people of God, do not harden your hearts pretending to be neutral in this spiritual war that is being waged.

[8 : 09] Instead, worship Jesus the King and live in the joy of his kingdom by following his word. Because as our Lord says, Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.