

Sermon Luke 11 14 28 3rd Sunday in Lent 1 Year series

Sermon: 3rd Sunday in Lent

Text: Luke 11:14-28 (v. 28)

Theme: Three kinds of hearers

Goal: To cling to Jesus' Word by faith, without doubting or criticizing it.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: How do you listen to God's Word in the church or when you read it at home? Just as an obligation? Maybe with skepticism, always having a question mark in your mind? Like many react to stories like the Gospel of today: *Can anyone still be possessed by the demon nowadays? Does the demon really exist???*

Have you had the opportunity to witness or to argue with someone who is always looking for a sign? *If I could just see God... or have a special sign from Him in my life... I would believe...*

Jesus had different kinds of hearers when He performed this miracle. Let's see the reactions of some of them:

I – The blasphemers

The leaders of the church accused Jesus to driving out demons by the power of the prince of the demons, Beelzebub. They couldn't believe that Jesus was doing it by the power of God. They refused to believe that He was the Messiah, sent by God.

Jesus argued with them, saying, *How can the prince of the demons work against himself? Here is someone who is stronger than the devil himself. I have the power to attack him and to take away his armor, driving out the demon from this poor man.*

In the same account reported by Matthew, Jesus called this critic as "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 12:31,32), a sin that cannot be forgiven because people are resisting to the gracious

work of the Holy Spirit, who wants to drive out the evil spirit from everyone to make room for Jesus.

The Pharisees had hardened their hearts against Jesus, like Pharaoh in the Old Testament reading (Exodus 8:16-19). Even when Pharaoh's magicians acknowledged that the signs Moses was doing were done by "the finger of God... Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen just as the Lord had said."

Jesus appealed to the people of His time and He appeals to the people of nowadays as well: "Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves" (John 14:11).

We still have blasphemers and people who don't want to believe, but they resist to God's Word. Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer and Luther explained it: *Hallowed be Thy name. What does this mean: God's Name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also. How is God's name kept holy? God's name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God's Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!* (1st Petition, Small Catechism).

II – Those looking for a sign

Among the hearers there were also some who were looking for a special sign to believe. The evidences of the miracles Jesus was performing were not enough for them to believe that Jesus was the Messiah sent by God. They wanted a special sign according to their will: Maybe fire from heaven, like in the time of Elijah; or some signs like Moses had performed.

This is one of the reasons why some churches who say they perform miracles are growing so fast. People want to see

something spectacular! They are like Thomas, who didn't believe in the witness of the other disciples who had seen the resurrected Christ; but Thomas wanted to see and even wanted to touch Jesus' wounds! What was Jesus rebuke to Thomas? "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

Just after our text Jesus pointed at a great sign that would happen to prove that He was really the Savior sent by God. Jesus said: "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." ... "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). Jesus was referring to His resurrection on the third day; – the bigger event ever in His life and in the world's history, that changed even the calendar as we refer to *Before Christ - BC* and *After Christ - AC* or *Anno Domini – AD = In the year of the Lord*. Now, with the influence of unbelievers, it is fashionable and politically correct to say *Current or Common Era= CE* and *Before Common Era – BCE*. They want to deny Christ and His resurrection. *Astronomical year numbering and ISO 8601 avoid words or abbreviations related to Christianity, but use the same numbers for AD (Anno Domini) years.* (Wikipedia)

And even so, with this unique sign of Jesus' resurrection, people don't believe in Jesus, and many are running after other so called *truths and way of life*.

III – Those who were amazed and believed

But there were always some believers among the crowd. "The crowd was amazed" ... "and a woman in the crowd called out, 'Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you'. Jesus replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it'".

It is not just a matter of listening, but a matter of believing and obeying. Faith doesn't exist without love and obedience. If I believe in God, if I trust in Jesus, I want to obey Him and to walk on His way. Jesus warns us: “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord’, and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). And He warns us strongly when He says in our text: “When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first.”

The devil was defeated by Jesus in our life when we were baptized. We renounced him and Jesus washed us and cleansed us from all unrighteousness. Our house is clean and organized. But if we don't allow Jesus to live in it 24 hours a day, it can happen that the evil spirit comes back and brings with him seven other spirits to occupy the empty home. This is my concern as pastor when people are absent from the Service and the Sacrament or if they don't read the Bible and pray at home regularly. They are giving way to the devil. And I am sure that none of us wants this for himself or for a brother or sister in Christ.

Conclusion: Jesus is gracious and still comes with His Word and love in spite of the blasphemers and the sceptics. He offers forgiveness, life and salvation to all through His Word and through the Holy Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. He lives in us and doesn't want to be driven out by our indifference or by lack of attention to His Word. “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it”. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 19 March 2017