

EXEGESIS OF LUKE 11:14-26

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May 2, 2016

¹⁴ And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute; when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed. ¹⁵ But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.” ¹⁶ Others, to test *Him*, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven. ¹⁷ But He knew their thoughts and said to them, “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house *divided* against itself falls. ¹⁸ If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. ¹⁹ And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges. ²⁰ But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²¹ When a strong *man*, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. ²² But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder. ²³ He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters. ²⁴ “When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ ²⁵ And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and takes *along* seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.” (NASB)

Genre and Boundaries

Luke 11:14-26 is part of the historiographical narrative infused with theological import characteristic of the Gospel of Luke. In Luke 1:3 the author promises to set out “an orderly account.” In Luke 11:14-26, set near the beginning of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem, the author continues this intent, with a demonstration of God’s power by Jesus, followed by an interaction with the crowd that leads to a teaching by Jesus.

The opening boundary is selected due to a scene shift. It is preceded by Jesus teaching how to pray and how graciously the Father responds with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Beginning with Luke 11:14, the narrative shifts to Jesus casting out a demon. The location also seems to have shifted. In Luke 11:1, Jesus is “praying in a certain place,” and then He teaches after he finishes praying. While He might have walked as He taught, the teaching about prayer does not indicate relocation to a new setting.

However, the location for Jesus casting out a demon seems an abrupt transition, thus the start of a new scene. Matera offers a similar conclusion that the scene has changed, based on the shift of focus and activity.¹

Luke 11:14 demonstrates the work of the Holy Spirit as referenced in verse 13. Culy, Parsons, and Stigall note the word *καί*, that begins verse 14, connects the Holy Spirit with the action that follows.² However, the focus of the teaching in Luke 11:14-26 is different, examining by what power Jesus casts out demons. While each scene transitions and is built upon by the next, the deliverance in verse 14 is more than a demonstration of the Holy Spirit. It is also the source of the crowd interaction and teaching in Luke 11:14-26, and thus begins the boundary of this selected passage.

The closing boundary sets off the current scene in which Jesus teaches about the power of God in undermining the kingdom of Satan. While Luke 11:27 offers the response of one woman to the value of Jesus' teaching, her comment is followed by Jesus' emphasis on the importance of hearing the Word of God. His response makes a clear transition to the next scene in which He addresses the crowds' demands for signs.

Through the preceding scenes, including Luke 11:14-26, the author has made hints at the crowds' demands for signs. In verse 27, Jesus addresses this directly, thus beginning a clear new scene which warrants its own boundaries. The next scene builds upon Luke 11:14-26, just as Luke 11:14-26 builds upon the scenes that precede it.

However, each scene has a clear focus, and that is why these boundaries have been

¹ Frank J. Matera, "Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-19:46): A Conflict with Israel," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 51 (1993): 63.

² Martin M. Culy, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Joshua J. Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 382-383.

selected. The interconnection and buildup is more clearly understood when each scene is examined on its own basis.

Social, Cultural, Historical, Literary Context

Prior to Luke 11:14-26, Jesus' authority has been established through Peter's confession, the transfiguration, and Jesus' disciples casting out demons. The author has demonstrated the arrival of the kingdom of God. Now the reader is introduced to the war between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Parsons describes the imagery as signaling "a battle between kingdoms of cosmic proportions."³ Until this point, glimpses could be seen of this battle in terms of deliverance and religious opposition. The war now comes to the forefront, including the opposition of the crowds.

As Green observes, this clash of kingdoms is illustrated through "militaristic imagery" that would speak to the earliest readers.⁴ Green notes that the illustration of the strong man in Luke 11:21 creates, in this socio-historical setting, an image of a guarded Roman mansion, to depict the strength not of an earthly kingdom but of Satan's kingdom.⁵ The emphasis is not on the overthrow of Rome; rather, the imagery of a Roman stronghold, overthrown by a greater power in verse 22, shows the depths of power God is bringing, in the person of Jesus, in coming against Satan's kingdom.⁶

As the tension escalates, the people within the narrative and the readers of Luke's Gospel are confronted with: a clear delineation between the two kingdoms; the necessity of commitment and full participation in the kingdom of God; and the stakes of

³ Mikeal C. Parsons, *Luke*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 191.

⁴ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 458.

⁵ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 457-458.

⁶ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 458.

not committing. The kingdom of God is not what the people expect, nor will it appear by their standards. From the threads of Holy Spirit activity woven through the background of Luke to this point, the author now creates an image in the center of the tapestry: what Jesus offers is nothing less than salvation that comes only by the power of God.

As the literary narrative brings into focus the battle between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God, the text is rich with layers of meaning and contrasts. Luke 11:14-26 begins with interaction that turns into a discourse. Action is followed by teaching, with the use of questions, logic, and contrasts. Jesus' argument builds from a direct response to the crowds, to an explanation of the power of the kingdom of God – what it is, what it is not, what it requires, what is at stake. The stakes build as the narrative unfolds, and this passage leads into the next with increasing tension.

Exegetical/Theological Problems

11:14: The lens widens to include the crowds. Green notes a shift in the crowds in this journey section to a more divisive force.⁷ The intensity of reaction against Jesus foreshadows the opposition that will grow as He draws closer to Jerusalem. Of note too is the division and uncertainty in the crowd. The tension is a palpable backdrop to the confrontation in this passage. The reader senses that the gloves have been coming off, and now Jesus will confront with stark reality the clash of kingdoms: the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. But will the people understand, even with this heightened intensity?

The contrast in verse 14 – from silence to speaking – highlights the contrast between the two kingdoms. The demon, representing the kingdom of Satan, is mute.

⁷ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 453.

When the man speaks, it is because the kingdom of God has moved to free him and has triumphed over the kingdom of Satan. While the crowds are amazed, it is not clear they understand what has really happened. Luke seems to contrast amazement with understanding. Perkins suggests the larger focus of this story is to demonstrate the in-breaking kingdom of God and to help people recognize God's power at work.⁸ It is possible that in emphasizing the lack of recognition from the crowd, the author helps the reader understand what the crowd does not: God's kingdom has arrived.

11:15: After all Jesus has taught and done, why do the crowds not assume He casts out demons by the power of God? Tannehill suggests these individuals, unable to contend with Jesus' power, attempt instead to label "Jesus as a tool of Satan," thereby reducing His influence.⁹ It is clear the people who question Jesus' power still do not understand what God is doing in their midst. Perkins suggests Luke 11 provides a context to the reader for understanding the power of God.¹⁰

Tannehill explains, "Beelzebul is the name of a Canaanite god. Pagan gods were viewed as demons."¹¹ In verse 15, "Beelzebul" becomes synonymous with "the ruler of the demons," which Jesus confirms as Satan in verse 18.¹² Parsons notes the earliest readers would have understood "Beelzebul" as Satan, and thus the accusation of Jesus as Satan's agent.¹³ Thus the author draws a line between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God in terms of the power at work.

⁸ Larry Perkins, "Why the 'Finger of God' in Luke 11:20," *The Expository Times* 115 (2004): 261-262.

⁹ Robert C. Tannehill, *Luke*, ANTC (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 192.

¹⁰ Perkins, "Why the 'Finger of God' in Luke 11:20," 261-262.

¹¹ Tannehill, *Luke*, 192.

¹² Tannehill, *Luke*, 192.

¹³ Parsons, *Luke*, 190.

The accusation in verse 15 is not made by everyone in the crowds, only “some.” It seems others are not actively against Jesus, but are they for Him? Throughout the Gospel of Luke, the reader can see Jesus is not looking for a half-hearted response. Μετάνοια is a change of heart, a turning away. Increasingly through this passage, the reader understands the clash of kingdoms. Either a person is for the kingdom of Satan or for the kingdom of God; there is no in between, no halfway, no passivity.

The previous verse indicates “the crowds were amazed,” suggesting applicability of amazement to all persons present. Amazement does not equate to understanding or acceptance, let alone commitment. Both Jesus and the author begin to deepen the distinction between “for” and “against” in the next verse, indicating that while not everyone is questioning Jesus’ power, others are demanding signs.

11:16: The author seems to use the testing of Jesus and the demands for a sign to reinforce the implication that, although “amazed” in verse 14, the crowds do not understand the significance of Jesus’ works of deliverance. Parsons notes that seeking a sign indicates opposition.¹⁴ Jesus does not address this demand for a sign until verses 29-30. Emmrich argues the inclusion in verse 16 is more than a setup for the later discourse; rather, the inclusion raises the stakes, setting this controversy in a situation similar to that of Moses, at a time when the people questioned “God’s salvific intent.”¹⁵ Emmrich suggests the crowds are questioning if Jesus is “the eschatological

¹⁴ Parsons, *Luke*, 190.

¹⁵ Martin Emmrich, “The Lucan Account of the Beelzebul Controversy,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* 62 (2000): 274.

prophet like Moses.”¹⁶ This reflects a familiar theme in the Gospel of Luke: the lack of understanding of God’s redemptive activity through Jesus.

The language of verse 16 creates a setting similar to Satan’s temptation of Jesus in the wilderness in Luke 4:1-12, especially verse 12. The Greek word πειράζοντες used in Luke 11:16, meaning “to attempt to entrap through a process of inquiry, test”¹⁷ comes from the same root as the word ἐκπειράσεις used in Luke 4:12, meaning “to entice to improper behavior, tempt,”¹⁸ which is the *modus operandi* of Satan, as seen in Luke 4:13a with the use of πειρασμὸν and in Luke 4:2 with the word πειραζόμενος. In the context of verse 29, when Jesus addresses those seeking signs as “an evil generation,” a connection seems possible between the demand for signs and an evil intent. Culy, Parsons, and Stigall suggest the emphasis is on “testing of Jesus’ credentials” rather than entrapment;¹⁹ while Parsons suggests this verse “recalls the ‘testing’ of Jesus in the desert by the devil.”²⁰ I would argue the comparison may relate more to the nature or motive of testing by “an evil generation” (verse 29) than to the type of testing.

11:17: Jesus discerns the thoughts of the crowds, a pattern already set in place by the author (Luke 5:22, 6:8, 9:47), implying the work of the Holy Spirit. A further implication is that God knows what is in the heart (offered explicitly in Luke 16:15), which underscores the importance of repentance in receiving the kingdom of God. Verse 17, focused on kingdoms in general, sets up for verse 18, focused specifically on the kingdom of Satan. The general focus and use of logic suggests a larger application

¹⁶ Emmrich, “The Lucan Account of the Beelzebul Controversy,” 274.

¹⁷ BDAG, 793.

¹⁸ BDAG, 793.

¹⁹ Culy, Parsons, and Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 384.

²⁰ Parsons, *Luke*, 190.

of Jesus' words. He paints first a general illustration of division for the crowds to consider, inviting them to recognize their own double-mindedness, and that division cannot be part of the kingdom of God. The implied comparison contributes to the sharp contours of the theme that the kingdom of God requires total commitment; the results of division and double-mindedness are extreme: "laid waste" and "falls."

11:18: Jesus uses logic to question the logic of His accusers. Tannehill notes this verse as confirming that Satan's kingdom will not stand, and is coming to an end, with God's power being the force that overcomes.²¹ Green reminds readers of the significance of attributing demonic activity directly to the kingdom of Satan.²² While today, many take this connection for granted, it is important to see that Luke is making clear: there is a line in the sand, and the war is between two kingdoms. The demonic activity affecting individuals are skirmishes as a result of this war.

11:19: The author presents the question of why Jesus is singled out; He is not the only exorcist. Exorcists exist among the Jews,²³ including those referenced in Acts 19:13-14.²⁴ Jesus' apostles in Luke 10:17 and another person in Luke 9:49 also have been casting out demons. The contrast with verse 20 is significant: the power of God is the important distinction. Twelftree observes that the author sees "God's Spirit as the source of Jesus' miracles."²⁵ While Luke 4:18 declares Jesus has come "to proclaim release to the captives," He also wants people to see in these exorcisms the power of God is at work, and the kingdom of God is here among them. Though the crowds have

²¹ Tannehill, *Luke*, 193.

²² Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 454.

²³ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 456.

²⁴ Parsons, *Luke*, 190.

²⁵ G.H. Twelftree, "Miracles and Miracle Stories," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013): 599.

singled out Jesus with the intent of accusation and doubt, the author uses their questioning to highlight the distinction of Jesus' deliverance ministry: the power of God.

11:20: Until this verse, the author has hinted at the work of the Holy Spirit behind the scenes. In this verse, the power of God comes to the forefront; Twelftree explains that the author "would have understood [the finger of God] as God's hand or Spirit."²⁶ The finger, or power, of God is specifically named by Jesus in conjunction with the arrival of God's kingdom. This is a much bigger implication than simply the power to cast out a demon. Beaton describes the Spirit's power as establishing God's kingdom.²⁷ When God's power moves on behalf of an individual, as in an exorcism, the kingdom of God has come to that person. This is important in the context of salvation as "available to all."²⁸ If the crowds seek the exorcism but they miss God's presence by which the exorcism takes place, they have missed seeing the kingdom of God. Luke 11:20 more fully expresses Luke 10:20, in which Jesus admonishes the disciples to rejoice about heaven, not about the exorcisms. Here, Jesus begins to connect His first response, to the questioning of the crowds, with the lead-in to His second response, regarding the demand of signs, that He will develop more fully starting in Luke 11:29.

Perkins suggests "the finger of God" is understood in the context of Exodus 8:19, in which the magicians of Pharaoh acknowledge God's power. Yet God's own people of Israel, in their questioning of Jesus' exorcisms and their demand for signs, do not.

Perkins suggests "hardness of heart" as the reason for this lack of understanding,²⁹

²⁶ Twelftree, "Miracles and Miracle Stories," 599.

²⁷ R. Beaton, "Authority and Power," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013): 64.

²⁸ Beaton, "Authority and Power," 64.

²⁹ Perkins, "Why the 'Finger of God' in Luke 11:20," 262.

much like Pharaoh's heart is hardened in Exodus 8:19. This comparison highlights the importance of the people recognizing the power by which God is working through Jesus, and the need to open their hearts to the truth.³⁰ Green observes that Jesus is asking people not only to change, but also to respond with "robust faithfulness;" and that He is trying to help the crowds see "the vibrant presence of God's power."³¹ Green thus offers a lens to see Jesus's words as exhortation, rather than condemnation.

11:21: Jesus continues the analogy of the house from verses 17-18, painting a more detailed picture and by this illustration equating Satan with the "strong man." The picture reveals Satan as armed, vigilant, and in control. The possessions might relate to influence, and in this larger context of deliverance, might include people. Just as in verses 17-18, a double meaning is possible. Verse 22 indicates someone stronger than the "strong man," which from the context of verse 20 would be God. The author is possibly allowing this illustration to serve double duty, offering on the inverse a glimpse of the kingdom of God as fully armed, vigilant, and undisturbed in its peace; all of which, in the context of verse 22, is greater than the kingdom of Satan.

11:22: None of the strong man's armor from verse 21 withstands the overpowering of God and His kingdom. The reference is first and foremost about Satan; he is going to lose his armor and his plunder in the presence of the kingdom of God. This seems to be a recipe for freedom, i.e., allowing God to overtake and overpower.

Once again, a double implication may be seen in the comparison and contrast between verses 21-22 that applies not only to Satan and his kingdom, but also to the crowds being misled and blinded by Satan. In the comparison and contrast between

³⁰ Perkins, "Why the 'Finger of God' in Luke 11:20," 262.

³¹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 455.

verses 21-22, the crowds are invited to recognize any false armor on which they rely, and that the source of this false armor is the kingdom of Satan. The implication is that none of this false armor or ungodly possessions will withstand the power of God. This reiterates the theme that a person is either fully in the kingdom of God, or fully not.

11:23: Jesus directly states the theme the author has been weaving throughout the preceding verses: the need for all-in commitment to the kingdom of God. In direct response and contrast to the disbelief expressed by the crowds in verses 15-16, and in comparison with verse 20, verse 23 clarifies that the kingdom of God is visible through God's power in Jesus. This is not expressed merely as a symbiotic relationship of God and prophet, but rather this language equates Jesus with the kingdom of God. Matera notes that Jesus "understands himself as God's messenger in whose ministry the kingdom is already present" and traces this back to Luke 10:9 and Luke 10:11.³²

Tannehill suggests verse 23 spells out the "growing polarization" that requires commitment.³³ I would add that verses 21-23 bring into sharp relief what the reader has witnessed throughout Luke: a war is taking place, and growing in intensity; no one is neutral or unaffected, whether the person realizes it or not. Emmrich confirms that verse 23 precludes neutrality.³⁴ Division has consequences; like the crowds in these verses, the reader is presented with a decision regarding the kingdom of God: in or out.

Matera connects the division and uncertainty of the crowds back to the need for repentance, and that they have not understood this need, as Jesus will address in His

³² Matera, "Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-19:46): A Conflict with Israel," 67.

³³ Tannehill, *Luke*, 193.

³⁴ Emmrich, "The Lucan Account of the Beelzebul Controversy," 270.

discourse beginning in verse 29.³⁵ Matera places the entire journey narrative in the context of “the ideological conflict between Jesus and Israel,”³⁶ which I would suggest brings in not only a Luke 3 and John the Baptist perspective on repentance, but also ties into the Scriptures of Israel, continually referenced by the author of Luke’s Gospel. The need to repent in order to receive the kingdom of God has been taught and demonstrated by Jesus throughout the narrative. At this intense point on the journey to Jerusalem, the crowds still do not understand. It is significant that Jesus continues to teach and warn them to recognize which side they are on, and why. It seems evident that God, through Jesus, is not giving up on them, a perspective also highlighted by the author through his continual references to God in the Scriptures of Israel.

11:24: Similarly to verse 16, verse 24 echoes Luke 4:1-12 of Satan’s 40 days of tempting Jesus in the wilderness. The imagery of ἀνύδρων τόπων as “waterless, dry places,”³⁷ or desolate wilderness, and of “seeking rest, and not finding any” echoes the Old Testament accounts of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for 40 years (cf. Exodus 14:3, Numbers 32:13, Joshua 5:6). Again, the connection with characteristics of Satan’s kingdom – temptation, rebellion, wandering, and restlessness – is clear.

Verse 24 suggests demons look for a place to “rest,” as in the case of Luke 8:31-32. Similarly, Culy, Parsons, and Stigall cite I. Howard Marshall in suggesting the “waterless places” indicate a lack of human inhabitants for the demons.³⁸ Thus the “house” in verse 24 would be the person possessed or oppressed by a demon.

³⁵ Matera, “Jesus’ Journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-19:46): A Conflict with Israel,” 68, 74-75.

³⁶ Matera, “Jesus’ Journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-19:46): A Conflict with Israel,” 76.

³⁷ BDAG, 91.

³⁸ Culy, Parsons, and Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 389.

11:25: In context of the verse that follows, the house described in this verse is somehow acceptable and inviting to the unclean spirit that has been cast out. Building on verse 24, the implication is that only the power of God has the ability to make the house unlivable for the unclean spirit, in which case the house, or person, would need to be completely under the power of the kingdom of God, as in verse 22.

Although verses 18 and 22 indicate that the kingdom of Satan will not withstand the power of God, verse 25 does indicate the tenacity of Satan, in the tendency of the unclean spirit to go back to the house. The implication is that permanent deliverance requires more than simply casting out a demon. It requires the kingdom of Satan to fall, to be laid waste, as in verse 17, and particularly in regard to the individual who housed the demon. Revisiting the contrast between verses 21 and 22, permanent deliverance requires a stronger man, i.e., God, to overthrow the strong man, Satan within the house (person) where the deliverance took place. The kingdom of God must come and live in that house, displacing the kingdom of Satan. The inverse of this context in verses 17, 21, and 22 is that, if the house (person formerly possessed/oppresed by the demon) is divided, or not guarded, i.e., not fully committed to the kingdom of God, it is subject to the return of the demon after deliverance.

11:26: This verse illustrates Jesus' statement in verse 23 and the division between the two kingdoms. In this verse, the reader begins to see the stakes of not committing fully to the kingdom of God; this escalation of stakes leads into the next segment, in which Jesus addresses the crowds regarding their demand for signs, helps them recognize the reality of their evil hearts, and warns them of the danger they are in.

Tannehill suggests the cause of the worse state is not directly indicated, but contextual clues bring to mind the necessity of commitment to Jesus.³⁹ I would add that this reaffirms the call to be all-in with regard to the kingdom of God. As verse 18 foreshadows, God is bringing an end to Satan's kingdom, but which side of this battle are the people on? Verse 26 describes how high the stakes are, even in the short run while the battle rages, for a person who is not all in. Throughout the Gospel of Luke, the author has connected the kingdom of God with salvation. What is at stake in this verse is not just the presence or absence of demons. They are but a symptom. What is at stake is the salvation that comes by the power of God through Jesus Christ.

Interpretation

Luke 11:14-26 comes at a point in Luke's narrative when the stakes are crystallizing. It is no longer sufficient to be amazed at Jesus, without understanding what God is doing through Him. As the journey to Jerusalem progresses, it is vital to the author of Luke's Gospel that his readers see God's salvific plan reaching fulfillment in Jesus; understand that the kingdom of God has arrived in Jesus; and recognize that in order to enter God's kingdom, they must choose to completely realign their hearts with God's kingdom. In verse 23, Jesus expresses clearly that whoever is not aligned with Him is against Him. A war is taking place between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God, with eschatological stakes. While Jesus uses logic to counter the testing of the crowds and their demanding of signs, He follows this with imagery that confronts Luke's readers to recognize on which side their hearts are aligned. For those against the kingdom of God, or not fully aligned, the consequences of the return of evil

³⁹ Tannehill, *Luke*, 194.

spirits after deliverance, and the greater consequences of a house and kingdom divided and falling are apparent. For those aligned with the kingdom of God, the imagery used in Luke 11:14-26 brings assurance of God's omnipotence vis-à-vis the kingdom of Satan. The greater power through which Jesus is setting people free from demonic oppression is the same greater power that is bringing to fulfillment God's eschatological plan to destroy the power of Satan by the presence of the kingdom of God, and likewise bringing to fulfillment the salvation that establishes God's kingdom into the hearts that receive Jesus.

Application

In daily Christian life, it is easy to forget this clash of kingdoms. A war is taking place, and no one is neutral. Luke 11:14-26 contains practical instruction regarding deliverance ministry. If a person lacks repentance, and does not realign his or her heart upon deliverance, the demonic oppression will return with greater impact. Additionally, the teaching on the clash between the strong man and the stronger man, God, reminds individuals not to be distracted by skirmishes of demonic irritation, but rather to stay focused on the big picture: God is moving in power against the kingdom of Satan. This big picture points to the need for an individual to be "all in," in every aspect of heart, mind, body, and life. Luke 11:14-26 reminds readers that the kingdom of God is already here, and it is vital to live as active participants in the reality of God's kingdom.

One possible sermon would focus on the kingdom of God. The message would help listeners train the eyes of their hearts to see the reality of God's kingdom in their midst. The sermon would begin with how Jesus' actions and teaching in Luke 11:14-26 point to the bigger picture of God's kingdom, and the war that is raging. The message

would continue by helping individuals recognize what kinds of problems stand in the way of being “all-in.” Individuals would then take quiet time with God to identify areas of their hearts where they need repentance. The sermon would close with a commitment to start living and seeing with kingdom eyes.

Reflective Summary

Luke 11:14-26 touches on many theological and ethical themes from the Gospel of Luke. A key theme is the need for repentance: a complete heart change, a turning away from old ways, and a realignment of one’s life as a disciple of Christ. The author of Luke sets out very early to establish his narrative in the importance of repentance, through his description of John the Baptist’s ministry in Luke 3. Luke 11:14-26, especially verses 23-26, offers a context for understanding repentance as aligning with Jesus, and the consequences of not turning one’s heart toward Jesus.

Repentance requires recognition of what God is doing through Jesus, which is another Lukan theme. Throughout Luke, including the use of the Scriptures of Israel, the author demonstrates that God is bringing His salvific plan to fulfillment through Jesus. The works and teachings of Jesus, including those narrated in Luke 11:14-26, center on Jesus’ fulfillment of God’s eschatological plan for salvation. Luke 11:14-26 demonstrates the importance, and the high stakes, of turning one’s heart completely to Jesus. Verse 23 underscores that repentance is a complete 180-degree turn; there is no halfway with the kingdom of God. Luke 11:14-26 brings the eschatological battle between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God into immediacy. The kingdom of God is not an idea set in a distant future, but rather it has already arrived through Jesus. The battle between the kingdoms affects everyone, whether or not a person understands this effect.

Related to repentance is the need for response to the work and Person of Jesus. The theme of response begins in Luke 1 as Mary responds to God's call, and continues through the responses to Jesus of individuals such as the blind man in Luke 18 and Zacchaeus in Luke 19. The response is not to be lukewarm, but full and with faith. Luke 11:14-26, especially verses 23-26, indicates the struggle of a half-hearted response. In the section that immediately follows, and throughout Luke's narrative, Jesus exhorts His listeners to recognize the condition of their hearts and the behaviors that keep them from a faithful and full response to Him.

The Gospel of Luke focuses on reversal – of the status quo, of expectations, of earthly kingdoms. Throughout Luke, Jesus challenges prevalent understandings (or misunderstandings), including perspectives of the Messiah and the kingdom of God, and of who is included in that kingdom. Luke 11:14-26 intensifies this theme. By the time they arrive at Luke 11, readers of Luke can see what the kingdom of God looks like. In Luke 11:14-26, they are invited to recognize, based on their responses to Jesus and the kingdom of God, which side they are truly on. Everything from Jesus' table fellowship, to childlike faith, to forgiveness of sins is brought into sharp relief in the context of Luke 11:14-26. Verse 23 makes clear: to the degree that a person is not practicing kingdom living, in the fullness of how it has been modeled and taught by Jesus, that person is against Jesus, and thus against God's salvific purpose.

Luke 11:14-26 opens with the deliverance of a person oppressed by a demon. The release of individuals from the grip of Satan's kingdom is another Lukan theme. Luke 11:14-26 situates the deliverance and healing ministry of Jesus in a larger context: the battle between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. The message is two-

fold. Jesus has stated in Luke 4:18 that He has come to set the captives free; each person He sets free, or that His disciples set free, is offered salvation in the kingdom of God. That each person matters to Jesus is evident throughout the Gospel of Luke, from His table fellowship and healings to His compassion toward the crowds. Even His exhortations, such as that found in Luke 11:14-26, demonstrate that He has not given up on the people. He still desires that they will hear and understand, and repent. The second part of the message goes beyond the realm of individuals set free. On the larger, eschatological scale of God's salvific purpose, Jesus is here to bring an end to the kingdom of Satan, by the power of God.

God's power, and the movement of God's power through the Holy Spirit, is woven throughout Luke-Acts. The discerning reader understands that when Jesus performs a miracle, or when a heart responds to Him in repentance, God's power is at work. In Luke 11:14-26, God's power is brought to the forefront of the narrative. In verse 22, God is the power that will overcome the "strong man," by which description Satan's kingdom is compared to a guarded Roman mansion. That God's power is stronger and is set about toppling Satan's strongholds is good news to those who are willing to repent and align their hearts completely with the kingdom of God, through Jesus Christ.

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