

The Finger of God

Luke 11:14-28

A large portion of this is recycled from a sermon on this text in 2007 – it is appropriate because of a number of things that are on TV and going on in the world today.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now He was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke; and the people marveled.

Some Bible teachers claim that there was no real demon, that the man was simply mute and Jesus healed him. Many believe that the people of Jesus' day were simpletons, superstitious, and medically ignorant. Because these people didn't know any better, many view that in "Bible times" all sorts of real illnesses were called demon-possession by these backwards people.

In the Middle Ages, people began to say, "God bless you," when somebody sneezed. Some today believe that these backward people didn't know what caused a sneeze, so these medically ignorant people thought a sneeze was the body's attempt to get rid of a demon.

If the truth must be told, because there were so many illness that killed people in the Middle Ages, people said, "God bless you" as a prayer that the person sneezing would not die. Literally, "God bless you, and heal you!"

Maybe we should ask if we mean that when we say it? Or has it just become a polite response done reflexively without any thought to it. What is more, who is to say that a sneeze is not your body's attempt to cast out evil spirits?

People try to explain the demon-possession of Jesus' day away, and they do it today as well. Many claim that there are no evil forces out there. In their unbelief they dabble with Ouija boards, tarot cards, fortune tellers, the horoscope and psychics. I keep getting spam e-mail inviting me for a free reading. If they really knew anything, they would not send such to me. Remember a couple years ago when psychic hot-lines were really popular? Did you call for your free reading? Maybe you stopped by the fortune teller at the Shawano Fair? After all, these things are just harmless amusements, aren't they? To do these and think there might be truth in them, is to trust something other than God

Kids get together for a sleep over and put out the lights in the bathroom and do a thing called 'bloody Mary'. It is just a harmless little children's game to scare them. And horror movies aren't so bad. It is just entertainment, isn't it? It is just harmless stuff, right? No, it is dabbling with the forces of evil and lets Satan have a little play area in your life.

Many people believe they can blend their faith in Christ with these other things and it is not an offense against God.

What does Jesus say in our text? "Whoever is not with Me is against Me, and whoever do not gather with Me scatters." We cannot blend Christ and other things. We cannot claim to worship the One true God, and also believe other things that deny Him. We cannot put these things together and be a blended person. "For there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved – than the name of Jesus Christ." (Acts 4:12)

Does God say anything about mediums? You know, psychics, conjure the dead, those who tell fortunes and stuff. Here is what God commands: 'You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I *am* the LORD. Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I *am* the LORD

your God. (Leviticus 19:31) And in the next chapter He commands: ‘And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people. ‘Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I *am* the LORD your God. (Lev. 20:6,7)

But how many do not listen to God's Word. King Saul consulted a medium, a spiritist, for advice and God, through the prophet Samuel, told Saul that He had turned away from him.

God, through Isaiah the prophet, wrote: And when they say to you, “Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,” should not a people seek their God? *Should they seek* the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them. (Isaiah 8:19-20) To whom should we go to seek wisdom and guidance for our life? Who should we trust to take care of us?

My friends, you have God's promise that He will be with you always, to the very end of the age. You have His promise that He will watch over you and guard you: or He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In *their* hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. (Psalm 91:11-12)

In the 27th chapter of Jeremiah we learn what God promised Zedekiah when he had turned to others for advice. He had turned from God, so God promised to turn his back on him and let him be led away into captivity. (Jer. 27:9)

In the thirteenth chapter of Acts, a magician was prophesying against God. Paul called down God's wrath upon the man and God made him blind. (Acts 13:4ff)

Let me make something perfectly clear, Satan is alive and well. Some of these who give tarot card reading, give psychic advice, consult the stars, or otherwise give a reading of a person's life – they indeed have genuine power. They really do speak with, or get guidance from the spiritual realm. But if this stuff isn't from God, then who does it? Their power comes from Satan, the devil himself, and his minions. Even those who are charlatans and frauds, are leading people away from solely trusting in God.

Ouija boards can work as spirits really move and spell out things. When they do, who is doing the moving? It isn't God, so that only leaves demonic powers to do it.

When we watch or read horror stories and such dealing demons, we become desensitized by the very blatant evil - even the demon-possession of things - and it opens us up to laugh at it as fake and unreal. When we take this cavalier attitude toward the things of the realm of Satan, it becomes easy to laugh that realm off. It becomes easy to say, “these things do not exist.”

They are real! Jesus truly cast out demons. Our text is not some made up story. This is not some illness that the people only thought was a demon. Christ cast out a demon that made this man mute.

It is common today to do meditation for relaxation and the release of stress. Sometimes it is used in regard to health issues, especially heart problems. There are even classes in Shawano and Clintonville on it. It has even come into some school classrooms as part of the holistic health programs.

In some of these forms of meditation, the leader talks you through a process. You cleanse yourself of all thoughts, sometimes instructed to make your mind like a white sheet of paper, to think about nothing and nobody. They promise that a spirit guide will appear who will help you find your center, your calming spot. This spirit guide will be your friend, one you can call upon to help you when things get rough and help you again to find your center, your calming spot.

Inviting a spirit inside you? A spirit that is not the Holy Spirit? Someone to call upon when things get rough, in order to help you out? That sounds like prayer, but it is not to God!

This form of meditation and finding a spirit guide is nothing more than inviting a demon into your life. Yes, they are real. Yes, they will possess you. And dear friends, Satan and his demons will not come to you looking all evil, with flames flickering up and down their bodies, they come as your friend. They want you to find peace and tranquility. But, they want you to find peace and tranquility outside of God. They want you to find your center away from the cross of Christ. So, they come in the guise of peaceful things, only to quietly lead you astray.

This is nothing more than pure deception. In Christ, your center is God. Your Spirit guide has a name, it is the Holy Spirit. He leads you to the calming spot at the foot of the cross. It is there, when you look upon the Son of God bleeding, dying, crying out in pain, that you find true and lasting peace. It is there that your sins, the sins of those around you, and all your daily stresses find release.

You have dabbled with the occult without even knowing it. When something else guides you, or when you search for life's answers in places other than in God's Word or prayer, you are dabbling with the forces of evil.

Today, in our text, a devil was cast out by the finger of God, by the very Son of God. Today my friends, Christ came to you and cast out demons. Christ speaks to you, and you are forgiven. Or, to put it another way, demons are cast out.

Christ is in our midst today. He comes and speaks to you. He promises the Comforter, the Holy Spirit to be with you in all that you do. He promises that He knows all of your life that is still before you. He promises to be there with you and strengthen you that you may bear up under all life's trials.

Jesus cast out a demon in our text, the people wanted some other sign from heaven. Today Jesus gives *you* a sign from heaven. He calls you into His presence by His name, the name He gave you at your Baptism, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You belongs here today because you are His. God claimed you as His own dear child, and His Spirit gathers you today in His house.

Today, He gives you a sign from heaven – the finger of God moves, "Your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." The finger of God has cast out your sinfulness, that which keeps you enslaved to death and Satan, and grants you His life. Heavens doors stand open for you; you are cleansed of your sin and made holy to come into His presence.

It is in this place that He gives you other signs from heaven, when He feeds you with His body and blood under the forms of bread and wine – a meal that forgives your sins and strengthens you to live a new life. He feeds you together with all the saints, even those who are seated around the throne of His grace in heaven.

What a marvelous thing to be touched by the finger of God. What great mercy to know God cares for us in such a wonderful manner. What confidence we can take with us today as we leave this place and walk out to face the world before us. We are God's children, blessed by Christ and free to live eternally with Him. Amen.