

## "Christus Victor" Luke 11:14-28 Oculi 2022

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Sometimes following Jesus – even just believing in Jesus – is a difficult thing. He says things that don't mesh with our worldview. He does unexpected things. Oh, we expect the things He does in the Bible because the Bible has been there all our lives, and so it may seem to make sense to us. What God was doing back then didn't make sense to everyone back then, any more than the things that God is doing today - or putting us through - make sense to us today, at times. Even when it did make sense, it wasn't what they wanted to hear or wanted to see and so they chafed against it and rebelled against it. Jesus called them on it and explained the truth to them so that we would see it today.

Our theme this morning is "Christus Victor", which means "Christ the Victor" or "Christ is the Victor". I chose those words because of Jesus' words in our text, "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters." Let us consider the words of Jesus today and see what it means in our lives day-to-day that Christ is the Victor.

Our Gospel opens with Jesus casting out a demon. You would think that would be a good thing, wouldn't you? His adversaries found fault with Him anyhow. They said that He was in league with the devil, and that was how He was casting out demons. They were cooperating

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with Him. The truth of the matter was that everyone who saw it was impressed. The text says that “the crowds marvelled.” They all knew that such a thing came from God - but to the Pharisees and Sadducees and Scribes of the Temple, it was an awful blow. How do you compete with a man who can do the things Jesus could do? And it was so clearly from God that they felt compelled to try to diminish Jesus’ authority and stature with the people before they lost all influence with the people themselves.

So they made up the “in league with the devil” thing. Think about it – He was doing things only God can do, and He was so clearly God’s man that the religious leaders felt the only way to diminish Him in the eyes of the people was to pretend that either He was in league with Satan or that He had done nothing special, and so they needed proof before they could believe what was painfully obvious to them in the first place. Makes sense, eh?

Jesus responded by pointing out their flawed thinking - if the devil is working against himself, how could he possibly succeed? Then He confronted them with the question of why they accused only Him of being in league with the devil. When others did these sorts of things – or tried to, the critics never challenged them. Jesus responded by asking, who are the others in league with, you know the ones of which

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you approve - and the ones everyone else believes are good, godly men? Consequently, Jesus said, they shall be your judges.

Then He made the point out loud that His adversaries wanted to avoid the people making in their heads - if Jesus was doing this by the power of God, then the Kingdom of God has come among them - that is, the Savior is here. Their plot to discredit Jesus backfired and opened the door for Jesus to make explicit what had been only implicit before. Jesus was the Victor there.

We are often tempted to do something very much as those adversaries of Jesus did. If we don't like the direction the Lord is leading us, we try to cast it into terms that favour our preferences and deny the leading of the Lord. I am talking about times when, where God seems to be taking us is going to take too much of our time, or too much of our attention, or too much of our energy, or too much of our money. We want to believe that lukewarm Christianity is better than no Christianity at all - in open denial of what Jesus said in Revelation 3:16, in the letter to the church at Laodicea, "So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth."

Our vacations and our family visits and anything else we try to come up with seems to be challenged by the concept of faithfulness to Christ and His people. When we feel that tug of conscience, we want to

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make the pastor back up a little and lighten up - sort of like the Pharisees wanted Jesus to back off and shrink in the estimation of the people. Note that no one has said anything to me - so I am not talking about complaints spoken to me, here.

Jesus answered them with a couple of parables: the Parable of the Strong Man Guarding His Home, and the Parable of the Unclean Spirit. These are different answers than you might expect in the heat of conflict. Jesus tells a parable on the devil - Satan is the strong man who guards his house until a stronger man than he comes and takes everything away. Jesus is the stronger man. Consequently, those who try to prop up the devil, even inadvertently, are working against Jesus. Neutrality, lukewarm-ness, and just not being involved, all serve the devil - He who is not with me is against me - and He who does not gather with me scatters.

Then Jesus describes First Century Israel as the house of the unclean spirit that has been driven out. He was driven out by the coming of Jesus Himself. But when Jesus has gone, the devil will return, and since Israel rejects Jesus, the last state is worse than the first, and the evil of the last state is far deeper than the first. That worsened condition is described as the first spirit bringing seven more spirits, more foul than himself, to live with him.

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'He who is not with me is against me' is Jesus' way of saying Solo Christo - in Christ alone - to the Jews of His day. If we are not working together with one another faithfully in the church, we stand guilty of working against Jesus Himself.

One of the women there that day was so impressed with the wisdom and truth of what Jesus said that she cried out, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed." She meant to praise Him for His wisdom and holiness - good things, but Jesus answered her and answered those who had been made to feel foolish by His response. He indicated that the significant thing was not how impressed they might be with Him, but how they dealt with God's Word. He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and keep it." True blessedness is in believing the Word of God both with your mind and with your life - not just thinking it is true - but living as though it is true.

That Word says that your sins are forgiven. Believe that Word! What a wonderful gift - and what a wonderful Gospel. Believe it with your mind and believe it with your actions.

Faith in Christ and true faithfulness will call us to change our behaviours, re-aligning our priorities, doing things first which we would rather leave for later. You probably feel the tug-of-war in yourself

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between what you “kind-sorta” think you ought to be doing as a faithful child of God on the one hand, and the tug to enjoy what is yours, and call Christ unreasonable for suggesting (even though it is your mind doing all the talking) that you live sacrificially as a deliberate Christian rather than self-indulgently as one who has every right to own, to do, or to go as you please.

Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it. The strong man in your life has been destroyed, and Jesus has taken his place - by taking your place on the cross. He has set you free - from sin, and from the slavery to yourself and your flesh - to serve Him. “Sin shall not be master over you, for you are no longer under law, but under grace.”

So, what are we to do? Trust the Word of God, of course. Walk in faith. Live every moment in the presence of God, and in the light of His love for you and the marvellous gift of your forgiveness and salvation. You have the Word of God, now how you respond, by the power of God within you, is up to you. Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it. And here, too Christ is the victor!

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.