

September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Pinecrest Baptist Church  
a.m.

Sermon Series: Striving With the Maker: The Ruin of Resistance  
Sermon #10 Title: Religion and Reality  
Sermon #10 Text: (Matthew 12:43-45)

In the previous section, the Lord revealed to us the final condemnation of those who embrace a fixed and final rejection of Jesus. He then moves from their ultimate condemning; to their ultimate condition.

If there were ever going to be a lesson on how to become demon possessed, this one is it.

**“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”**

- Note the last statement that Jesus makes in this paragraph.
- **“Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”**
  - Now when you read this parable, as some call it, not only does He show us their future, but He shows us how things are working in the present.

Now that being said, before we open up the parable, let's refresh our minds as to who the object of lesson is for. – “this wicked generation.”

- **“An evil and adulterous generation.”** –
- The phrase here is introduced, and twice applied later in the passage.

**“evil”** – Greek Word – poneros – “evil, wicked, bad, worthless...”

**“adulterous”** – Greek Word – moichalis – “unfaithful” with the more pointed use here speaks of one who is “married that is unfaithful”

**“generation”** – genea – same race, or “people of the same kind”

Now when we put those things together, we have “a people of the same kind of evil’ and a people of the same kind of adultery.”

- Adulterous generation, when applied to Israel throughout the scripture is the accusation that Israel as a people were not faithful to God.
  - The Old Testament calls Israel the wife of God.
  - Jesus said here that they were an “unfaithful, disloyal, and unloving” toward the God that chose her, saved her, and married her.
- With that being said, let's gather our setting.
  - This group of Pharisees have fought with Jesus over the Sabbath day.
  - They have attacked Him for healing in a Synagogue on the Sabbath day.

- They have accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Satan.
- And the Lord has just taught everyone standing around about the Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, and the judgment on the actual condition of the heart.

In the previous statement, the Lord declared that these very people, and those who are just like them, are in worse condition than the men of Nineveh; and that they are far worse than the pagan queen of Sheba. And in doing so, could make no stronger condemnation to these very Pharisees who's entire identity was wrapped up in their religious devotion, and their moral superiority.

- Totally devoted to the Religion of the Jews
- Totally insistent on a moral way of life
- And yet, more evil and worse off than the demons who would at least admit that Jesus is the Son of God.

In the picture of this text, the Lord Jesus does two things:

#1 – He pulls back the curtain between the seen and unseen, and lets us have a look at what happens in the unseen world. – He's done this before, and before He ascended to heaven, He would do it again.

(Christ often gave us looks into laws of "spiritual physics" and into the world of unseen powers in order for us to have an insight, and an understanding of the world around us.)

#2 – He explains what will happen to the very people who have been fighting him in the name of their own religion.

Opening this sermon that Jesus preached, we take note of three primary issues that He lets us in on.

## I. The Current Status of Unclean Spirits –

What is behind the veil, what do we know and can we know about these things that Jesus Himself is talking about?

### A. *They are Living* – “an unclean spirit”

1.) “**unclean**” – means impure, perverted, tainted, or dirty, or literally defiled.

- these are things in the physical world that would bring sickness.

- unclean utensils
- unclean surgical instruments
- unclean, defiled, or contaminated food.

\*Note – It is a phrase or idea that renders that which was useful to that which is detrimental.

2.) “**spirit**” – “pneuma” – the same word that used to explain the “Holy Spirit.”

- a breath or wind

\*Note – In the context of an “intelligent, personified spirit” we are talking about an “actual entity with intelligence that moves like the wind, and blows upon the mind, and heart of man to influence his thinking, his emotions, and his decisions.

- It is a “wind of thought, or breath of intelligence” that moves through the mind like an autumn breeze in the trees.

The Holy Spirit of God fills, indwells believers, and uses the Written Word to blow through the hearts, minds, and emotions of the saints; guiding, convicting and working inside them to make them more like Jesus.

- But know this. – There is ONE Holy Spirit that moves in every believer. “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” – Romans 8:9

There is only ONE Holy Spirit

- But there are multitudes of “unclean spirits.”  
- In Mark 5:8-9 we are given an example of this; when Jesus put the devils into a herd of swine and sent them into the sea of Galilee.

“For he said unto him, **Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.** And he asked him, **What is thy name?** And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.”

John wrote in 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:1 – to “try the spirits, whether they are of God:...”

\*Note – Now here’s the point. – Just as an “unclean utensil” can make the body sick, and if bad enough cause death; so an unclean “spirit” can contaminate the mind, and the heart.

Furthermore, just as the Holy Spirit indwells a saint. -An Unholy Spirit can in fact come to possess a lost man.

(I don’t want to get too far into how all of this works, because there is much about it that remains a mystery. Nonetheless, there are certain things we can be aware of according to the Word of God.

- A man who does not know the Lord Jesus can be:  
**- Oppressed by an Unclean Spirit** – (Acts 10:38 – “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with

power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.”

- It is the idea of having power over someone and abusing it.

Paul said “give not room to the devil” through sin, and sometimes people build him a luxury suite where demons will take up residence. Oppression does not live on the inside of the man, but oppressive devils establish a campsite in your front yard, and laugh when you want them to leave.

**Harassed by an Unclean Spirit** – Luke 6:18 – “And they that were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed.”

- literally disturbed, troubled or afflicted by  
- this is the idea of constant movement or assault upon someone’s heart and mind.

**Possessed by an Unclean Spirit** – Matthew 12:22 – “Then was brought unto Him one possessed with a devil.”

- it is the fullest idea of the word, meaning that someone is “seized by, and filled with.” –

Now the first two: - Oppressed and Harassed, happen from the outside in; and even those who are saved and walk in the flesh can put themselves in places to be harassed and oppressed.

The last one – Possessed – is when it sets up shop on the inside, and operates according to its own will. Very often taking over and suppressing the personality of the person they have.

\*Note – Underscore this and move on. Unclean Spirits are Living Beings. They move upon the heart and mind, like the wind does an oak tree. They can Oppress you; they can Harass you, and if you do not belong to Jesus, they can Possess you!

The only reason all lost people are not Possessed of demons is not because the demons are just nice to them. Like Satan himself, they live with a leash, they are only allowed to go as far as God will allow them; and when men and women willfully open themselves up to all things satan, the LORD quite often responds by letting them have what they desire.

A. - They are Living

**B. They are at Liberty – “gone out of a man...”**

1.) They obviously have a degree of freedom to come and go as they see fit.

a.) 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:8 – “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

b.) Job 1:7 – “And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? They Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.”

\*Note – Now for the sake of Jesus’ statement, read it closely. He is not talking about an “unclean spirit” that has been “cast out of a man.” – Rather he is speaking of one who has gone out of a man on his own.

- the phrase means to “go out, or come out” and it speaks of the will and freedom of the one taking the action.

Why would a demon leave a man on his own accord?

- Jesus says here this one left looking for rest...

- literally a “resting place” a “stopping point” or “relief from something.”

(Here is one minute insight into the world of the unclean spirits – Number One - They are as restless and miserable as is any other sinner in the world can be.

-But Number Two - Here is a slight insight into their motives for attacking people.

(We have always said, In order for Satan to hurt God, he and his minions seeks to hurt you. – That is the ultimate aim and desire of his to overthrow, overcome, or overwhelm God by bringing pain, sorrow, and suffering to the world, and then getting that world to blame it on God.)

- All of that is so...

- But tucked right in there nice and tight, is the reality that they too are looking for a place to find relief from their torments, and due to some reason we cannot know, they believe they will find their rest inside the bodies, hearts, and minds, of human beings.

They are Living; they are at Liberty

**C. They are Lost– “...he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and findeth none”**

\*Note – The picture here is telling. It is a picture of a fallen angel roaming a desert looking for relief that isn’t there.

- Now what does that tell you...

1.) They will find no more rest in the heart of the lost than the lost do.

2.) They will find no more peace in the mind of man, than man does.

3.) They will find no more satisfaction in destroying men's lives than what men find trying to destroy other men's lives.

They are under the same curse as all men; yet different! – They have no hope; because Jesus did not die for them. Jesus made no effort to redeem them.

### That my friend is the current status of unclean Spirits!

#### II. The Visible State of Cleaned-Up Souls

\*Note – Now let's apply this. While the unseen, unclean spirits have found a dry hole in these lost hearts; what is on the outside of this "man" in the parable would be impressive to all eyes.

- The "Man" of verse 43 looks wonderful to the rest of the world.

(In fact, the "man of verse 43" is the poster boy of the generation of Pharisees the Lord just called wicked.)

- Remember – "**this man**" is the example of "**this wicked generation**."

Notice the characteristics of his life, without any influence of this evil spirit.

##### **A. Void of Evil** – "**empty**"

1.) There is no "unrighteousness" there is no "evil" there is no "sin" there is no "immorality" in his life at all.

a.) the picture is of a man who upon all examination of other men, no one can find one thing wrong with him in his life.

(1.) His morality appears right.

(2.) His religion appears right.

(3.) His character appears right.

Now before we move on from that. – This is the ideal man in the mind of the Pharisees.

- As one writer put it, they were "moralists of the highest order." – If you were looking for someone as clean as a whistle, this is such a man!

- His life is void of evil!

**B. Vacated History** – "**swept**" – Whatever he used to be he is no longer!

1.) this is a picture of one who is quick to clean up any mess he makes, if he makes one.

2.) this is a picture of one who has rid his life of all past habits, and past sinful patterns.

\*Note – He may very well have been a rascal, but due to his new found friends in the Pharisees, Rule-Keepers, and Religion, all of that is behind him; he has none of that in his life.

**C. Visible Charm** – "**garnished**" – this word means "adornment" – easy to look at, be around, and attractive.

1.) this is one who young children look up to with admiration.

This "man" who represents this wicked generation, from all outward appearances, looks like he has an All-American – Blue-Ribbon Religion. He used to be a scoundrel; he found religion, follows the rules, and keeps all bad things out of his life; who wouldn't want their daughter to marry a man like that.

Me.

The problem is that this man is as lost as a fruit fly in a snow storm.

When we sing “Faith is the victory that overcomes the world” we aren’t singing about the “Absence of sin” – we are singing about the PRESENCE Of Jesus.

The victory is not the “absence of the evil spirit” – the Victory is the Presence of the Lord Jesus. – It is not merely what is missing in your life, that brings “right-ness – and full-ness.”

If you’re idea about “religion” or about “Christianity” is that its sole purpose is to get all the bad out of you; you only have half the story, and you have it upside down.

- It is not to FIRST get the bad out of you. – It is to FIRST Get Jesus INTO you.

- He pays for your Bad
- He indwells your heart
- He leads you not into temptation, but delivers from evil.

Religious people readily admit sin is bad, and should be repented of; but it is not the subtraction of sin that brings rightness, it is the addition of Jesus.

(imagine someone being born, live, and die and having never sinned – they’d still have to be saved because of their nature, and because of who and what is NOT in their life, which is Jesus.)

The Pharisaical rejection of Jesus was not a resistance to the idea of getting sin out of their life. – Their rejection of Jesus was resistance to the idea of getting Jesus INTO their life.

You can stop drinking, smoking, cussing, chewing, lying, stealing, and bad manners all you want to, and all you are is a religious shell of a house ready for something else to take up residence.

- You might be nice and clean and a good neighbor, and the last thing an evil spirit might do inside of you, is change that. – he might do all he can to make sure you stay satisfied with that.

### III. The Ultimate End of Unredeemed People –

\*Note – This is what Jesus says of the ultimate condition of those religious people who have the attention of demonic spirits.

#### A. Owned by Satan – “I will return to my house”

1.) This man who had a life void of evil is seized and filled by this unclean spirit, and 7 more spirits worse than this one.”

\*Note – The picture is easy to see. This demon spirit had abandoned this man for greener pastures. This unclean spirit believed he could find better relief for him in someone “less religious.”

(You’d think – that he could have gone down to the local brothels, and gambling halls, and saloons, and night clubs. Maybe even the prison houses – Surely he can find more comfortable housing in those places.

Friend this ought to speak volumes. – (Here is the mind of the unclean spirit) - This demon found out, he was far more comfortable in an empty religionist, than he would be in a bar-room brothel. – If that doesn’t tell you how evil, empty religion is, I don’t know what will.



The end result here, is that this demon “ceases his wondering, and lays claim to the heart of this man. Seizes him as his property and fills him with not only his presence, but the presence of others!

**B. Occupied by Evil – “dwell there”**

1.) By now, he is not merely demon possessed... He is Demons possessed. – By my count there are now 8 demons who have taken up residence in this man with a Blue-Ribbon Religion.

a.) Literally these unclean spirits become “at home” in the body, and by this point will fight for their own property. –

\*note – They’ll fight a man against his own conscience, they’ll fight a preacher with the Word of God in his mouth – They’ll fight a family trying to convince someone to turn to Christ – they’ll fight, they’ll fight, they’ll fight, they’ll fight all things Jesus, all things Bible, and all things God.

Owned by Satan, Occupied by Evil – and Finally

**C. Overwhelmed With Death – “the last state of that man is worse than the first.”**

- 1.) At the first, he had opportunity to fill his house with the Lord. At the first he had opportunity to fill his house with the Word of God, and the Son of God; but left it all alone.
- 2.) What ultimately was an opportunity for life, has become the final condition of death.

Now let me say this and clear it up before anyone gets the wrong idea. Don’t read from this, that every person who stays lost will ultimately be demon possessed, that is not

what Jesus is teaching, and neither will you find that in any other passage of scripture.

What you will find though. Is that they will make themselves a candidate for it.

- Just as a man can resist the Holy Spirit – a man or a woman through with their conscience and their free moral agency can resist being possessed with a demonic spirit.

- But you cannot stop them from harassing you; and you cannot stop them from oppressing you; - except through Jesus.

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Conclusion: Friend, religion is evil; but Reality remains the same. The spiritual world is not a matter of religion, it is a matter of reality. The eternal world is not a matter of religion, it is a matter of reality. The judgment of God is not a matter of religion, it is a matter of reality. – And so is the saving grace of Jesus Christ. – He paid our sin debt at the cross; and He frees us from sins power as we follow Him.

Fighting Him a little bit now – leads to fighting Him Fiercely later. Striving with the Maker really does bring a man to Ruin.