

The Gospel According to Luke

“Dust Devils”

Chapter 11:14-36

Introduction

You’ve seen **dust devils**. A dust devil is a whirlwind that looks a lot like a small tornado. Dust devils result from superheated air located near hot ground rising into colder air above. Dust devils are mostly harmless, swirling across fields or parking lots, kicking up leaves and causing a commotion.

Some people call the clumps of dust that gather along the floor *dust bunnies*. You may have a *Dirt Devil* vacuum at home to devour your dust bunnies. The slogan for the vacuum is, *Nothing escapes the power of a Dirt Devil*. Let’s face it: How much power do you need to vacuum a dust bunny?

I can’t prove it, but I think **all** of these terms and ideas originate in our story in the Gospel of Luke. Look again at verses twenty-four through twenty-six:

Luke 11:24 “When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’”

Luke 11:25 And when he comes, he finds *it* swept and put in order.

Luke 11:26 Then he goes and takes with *him* seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first.”

The **unclean spirits** in the story are demons, sometimes called *devils*. They hang out in **dry places**. Other versions of the Bible translate this as *waterless*, or *arid*, or *desert regions*.

These **unclean spirits** are the original dust devils! The man in our story swept-out his heart, thinking it was clean; but instead he made it more inviting for these dust devils to inhabit him.

Sweeping-out your heart is a picture of reforming your life. You've got problems, or issues; addictions or compulsions. So you set out to improve yourself; you set out to reform your ways. You can accomplish a great deal of reform. But reform always leaves you *vacant* and *vulnerable*.

God is not looking for reform. He is calling upon you to **repent!** Repentance fills your heart, leaving you *occupied by* God, and with the things of God – by which you *overcome* your problems, your issues, your addictions, your compulsions.

You want to repent, *not* reform. We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Reform And You Will Be Vacant And Vulnerable, and #2 Repent And You Will Be Occupied And Overcoming.

#1 Reform And You Will Be Vacant & Vulnerable (v14-26)

You'd think everyone would be thrilled that a mute man had been delivered from a demon. Instead, there were some who were so opposed to Jesus that it didn't matter what He did, or who He healed or helped. The exorcism left Jesus' critics in a tight spot. They could not deny the miracle; but they still wanted to slander Jesus.

The critics came up with two arguments:

Luke 11:14 And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled.

Luke 11:15 But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

Luke 11:16 Others, testing *Him*, sought from Him a sign from heaven.

These were two separate arguments. Jesus dealt with the first in verses seventeen through twenty-six, then with the second in verses twenty-seven through thirty-six.

Some arguments are just stupid! Casting-out demons by the power of the Devil was a stupid argument. Nevertheless, Jesus answered it patiently.

Luke 11:17 But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house *divided* against a house falls.

Luke 11:18 If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub.

The devil is real. Demons are real. They are organized and against you.

Who is **Beelzebub**? It is a name derived from the pagan god, **Baal**. He was sometimes called **Baal-Zebub**. His name can mean ‘Baal the Prince,’ or ‘Lord of the Flies,’ or even, ‘God of the Dung Piles.’ The pagans – get this – looked at piles of dung; they saw flies land there, *and then life would come forth!* They thought it miraculous – *life from dung!* (We know they were laying their eggs there).

The Jews used the term **Beelzebub** in a derogatory way. It was the worst slander you could possibly apply to Jesus.

But it was stupid. **A house divided** against itself **falls**. Jesus had been casting out demons everywhere He went. It was obvious He was at odds with them; it was obvious there was a battle raging between Him and the demonic legions.

Not only that, their argument backed them into a corner:

Luke 11:19 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? Therefore they will be your judges.

There were others who had a ministry of exorcism. They did not have the full power and authority of Jesus; but they enjoyed some success. If you criticize Jesus, you criticize your own **sons**.

Luke 11:20 But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Jesus was pointing His listeners back to the book of Exodus. Moses was doing spiritual battle with the magicians of Egypt. They could match certain of Moses’ miracles by the power of Satan. But it came to a point where they were defeated, and told Pharaoh that Moses was performing his miracles by **the finger of God**.

The **kingdom of God** had arrived, because the King was on-scene. Jesus was demonstrating that He had power and authority over Satan. Then He told a little story to illustrate His point:

Luke 11:21 When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace.

Luke 11:22 But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils.

Satan is the **strong man**. Jesus is the one **stronger than he** Who **overcomes him**.

Their argument was stupid. Jesus was patient with them, and next shows compassion towards them in a warning:

Luke 11:23 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

Jesus had come to **gather** the Jews into the promised kingdom. Sadly, they would reject the Lord, and be **scattered**. They would be scattered all over the earth – as they have been for close to two thousand years.

You cannot remain neutral about Jesus Christ. You must make a decision to *receive* Him or *reject* Him. Until you receive Him, you **are** rejecting Him.

Only Jesus could tie all of this together by telling another story:

Luke 11:24 “When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’”

Luke 11:25 And when he comes, he finds *it* swept and put in order.

Luke 11:26 Then he goes and takes with *him* seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first.”

Jesus had just cast-out an unclean spirit. He had been casting-out demons everywhere; it was a mark of His ministry. It was a picture to the nation of Israel:

1. Satan was being defeated; he was being cast-out of Israel.

2. Jesus was cleaning house, preparing the Jews for the kingdom on earth.
3. They would reject Him!
4. Satan would fill the void, and the last state of Israel would be worse than before.

Instead of merely being oppressed by the Roman government, they were attacked and murdered by them in 70AD, then scattered all over the earth for the past two thousand years.

Listen to this lament of Jesus, from Matthew 23:37-38

Matthew 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing!
Matthew 23:38 See! Your house is left to you desolate;

See the similar language? Jesus wanted to **gather** them into the kingdom. Instead, their **house** was **left desolate** because they refused to receive Jesus. A **house** left **desolate** is overrun by demons and scattered.

The story is for and about the nation of Israel, but it has a broader application for us. The man in the story, who sweeps out his house, is like a person who tries to reform their life. It's something we all tried at one point or another. You recognized problems or issues; addictions or compulsions. You wanted to be a better person; maybe you wanted to save your marriage. You may have tried religion; or motivational seminars; or medications; or programs of various kinds.

And sometimes you accomplished remarkable reforms! You beat addictions; you preserved marriages. But a reformed heart is still a vacant heart, and thus vulnerable. Even if you can preserve your reforms for your entire lifetime, the **last state** will be **worse**. You will enter eternity without Jesus Christ, and thus without salvation.

God is not calling upon you to reform. **He wants you to repent!**

#2 Repent And You Will Be Occupied & Overcoming (v27-36)

Remember, there were two criticisms against Jesus. The second was that they **sought from Him a sign from heaven**. Casting-out devils on earth was not enough; they wanted something to come down from heaven.

As Jesus turned His attention to answering this second criticism, He was interrupted by a woman in the crowd:

Luke 11:27 And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed *is* the womb that bore You, and *the* breasts which nursed You!"

What was this lady thinking? I can't say for sure. It is interesting that Jesus was about to discuss their desire for **a sign from heaven**. They already had their **sign**, but rejected it. In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah predicted the virgin birth as a **sign from heaven** (Isaiah 7:14). It's possible this woman was a devout Jew who was referring to the famous passage. Luke certainly interjected this here for a reason.

People still think that some sign from heaven is necessary. Even Christians get caught-up in the supposed 'need' for more signs and wonders in the Church in order to attract people to Jesus. There have already been plenty of signs.

Luke 11:28 But He said, "**More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!**"

The words, **more than that**, are better translated by the word, **rather**. **Rather** than seeking a sign, **hear the word of God and keep it**.

(There was in these words, of course, anticipation of the worship of Mary. Jesus was clearly warning against any such worship of the virgin Mary. As blessed as she was to bear Jesus in her womb, she was far more blessed when she received Him as her Savior and was herself born into God's family – just like every other Christian).

The interruption provided Jesus a perfect segue into His next topic:

Luke 11:29 And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, "This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet.

Luke 11:30 For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation.

Luke 11:31 The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon *is* here.

Luke 11:32 The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah *is* here.

Jesus wove two Old Testament tales together to make His point. The **Queen of the South** refers to the Queen of Sheba. She came a great distance, at great personal cost, to hear the **wisdom of Solomon**. She started out a skeptic, but was convinced after hearing what Solomon had to say.

Jesus was the wisdom of God, much greater than the **wisdom of Solomon**. Some were denying His wisdom by seeking a **sign**. *The Queen of Sheba would be appalled!*

Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish. He preached to **Nineveh**, and the entire city repented.

Jesus was obviously **greater** than the reluctant and rebellious Jonah. But Jesus' preaching was being rejected. Even after He would rise from the dead; even after spending three days and nights in the tomb; the majority of the nation would reject Him.

The Jews already had a sign from heaven; but they rejected the virgin birth. If they could reject the word of God as preached by the Son of God, no further sign from heaven would serve to change their minds.

Thomas Kinkade has become famous as the painter of light. Light pours out from the windows of all his buildings, giving you a sense that the dwelling is occupied. You feel as though you're being invited in to enjoy the hospitality and fellowship of the house.

I think that is the idea in the next verses. Those who **hear the word of God and obey it** are like a house filled with **light**. They are enjoying the hospitality of heaven, and fellowship with God.

Luke 11:33 “No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts *it* in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light.

Luke 11:34 The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when *your eye* is bad, your body also *is* full of darkness.

Luke 11:35 Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness.

Luke 11:36 If then your whole body *is* full of light, having no part dark, *the whole body* will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light.”

Jesus had just mentioned repentance. When you repent of your sin, and receive Jesus, the light goes on in your heart. You are occupied by God as the Holy Spirit comes to live inside you.

Once occupied by God, you are able to overcome. Whatever you were struggling with – problems, issues, addictions, compulsions – God sheds light on them and gives you the power to overcome them.

Why do we continue to struggle – even after we are *occupied* by God and have power to *overcome*?

Jesus suggested two reasons we continue to struggle: *Secrecy* and *sin*.

1. First: Do you light a **lamp**, then try to hide it? No; you don't. But sometimes we keep our relationship with God somewhat **secret**. We keep it secret from others. But sometimes we try to keep it secret from ourselves! There are parts of our lives that we keep for ourselves – not allowing God to take control.
2. Second: Jesus mentioned your **eye** and spoke of it being **good** or **bad**. The eye mostly, but your other senses as well, are how you experience the world around you. If you experience things in the world around you that are spiritually good for you, you encourage the light within you to shine all the more brightly. You will overcome the things you struggle with – seeing them clearly just the way God sees them. But if you start taking-in things that are spiritually bad, they will try to extinguish the light of God's word.

Sin clouds your vision and judgment, darkening your heart and ruining your life.

Tom Bodet, owner of Motel 6, gets on the radio and TV and promises, *We'll leave the light on for you*. Repentance from your sin leaves the light on in your life.

Conclusion

Reform leaves you *vacant* and *vulnerable*.

Repent, and be *occupied*. Then, be ready to repent and you will find yourself *overcoming*.