

# What's Worse Than Having an Evil Spirit?

by Sandeep Poonen

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*We must be careful not to get seven worse spirits than before by being clean and empty, and instead gather with Jesus and obey His commands.*

**Duration:** 29:08

**Scripture:** Matthew 21:28-31, Luke 11:24-28, Luke 12:42-43, Luke 16:14-15, Luke 18:9-14

**Topics:** "Spiritual Warfare", "Following Jesus"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the dangers of being spiritually empty and clean, likening it to a house swept but left empty, making it vulnerable to worse spiritual influences. It emphasizes the importance of not just outward cleanliness but also filling oneself with the teachings and spirit of Jesus to avoid falling into pride, self-righteousness, legalism, judgment, love of money, honor-seeking, and hypocrisy, as seen in the Pharisees. The message urges believers to heed God's word, observe it, and truly follow Jesus, even when faced with challenges or temptations.

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## Transcript

Praise God for what we've heard. I want to follow on, on what we've heard from Luke chapter 11. The passage I want to speak on is from verses 14 through 28.

I won't go through the whole passage, but Luke chapter 11, 14 through 28. It is so classic of human tendency that we become the standard, and we become the standard of what is perfectly balanced. Religion, Christianity, anybody who works harder than us is working too hard.

Anybody who doesn't work as much as us is a lazy person. That's the way we comfort ourselves and assuage our jealousy and envy of other people. What is the right extreme that all of us want to get into? Let's just think of it as a continuum.

Rightmost is that we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Does anybody who disagrees that if I was somebody who was filled with the Holy Spirit, that would be where I'd want to be? That's where we're all heading towards. That's where we'd love to live a life every day filled with the Holy Spirit.

What's the other extreme? Demon possessed? Would that be the other extreme? I saw something in this passage, strikingly different. Something worse than being demon possessed. To be demon possessed, just to explain that very simply, is to have something evil inside of us, but in such a way that it even

controls you, and you don't have any control over it.

So a demon possessed person could be a person who's possessed by a demon, one of the evil spirits, but where that even controls the way your body. So you come out and shout, and you throw yourself in the fire like it did, and bound yourself with chains, and had an extreme there. But I read this passage in Luke 11, verse 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. And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. 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. This is a person who had an unclean spirit in them. It somehow left the person, but when it comes back to this person, it finds that it is swept and put in order.

I want to speak on this very carefully, but I want to speak on something that I hope you will get the point of what I'm trying to say. We can be cleaned and empty, and we're worse off than if we were not clean. We can have an unclean spirit inside of us that gets kicked out of us.

If we are clean but empty, we are in great danger because this passage is right. I'm worse off because it'll come with seven others. And the last state of that person will be worse off than the first.

Now, what did Jesus say this in context? That's in verse 14. In verse 14, you see that Jesus healed a person who had a demon and was dumb, and the multitude marveled. And they said, this is just one demon kicking out another demon.

And verse 16, some of them were saying, show me a sign. And then what ends up happening is Jesus responds to him and says, a strong man fully armed guards his own homestead. His possessions are undisturbed.

But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor and distributes the plunder. He who is not with me is against me. And he who does not gather with me scatters.

It's in this context that Jesus says, be very careful that you could have been cleaned, but you're empty. You said a prayer many years ago. You made a commitment to the Lord many years ago.

And your life now has a general order and cleanliness to it, but you're empty. Because you're not with Jesus. Verse 23, you're not with Jesus and you're not gathering with Jesus.

What is Jesus asking you to gather? All the things of that enemy's possessions that's in your house, gather it up. That's that stuff that used to belong to the enemy. That's that mindset that used to belong to the enemy.

Gather it. He finds it that it has been swept up. The floor is clean, but all kinds of articles on the shelves, habits, lifestyle, choices of what we watch, choices of what we listen to, that don't necessarily go away overnight.

And God says, he's not with me. It's against me. If you're not gathering with me, you're going to be scattering.

And it's in this context that he says, be very careful. That you allowed Jesus to come and sweep the floor. But what about your bookshelves? What about your movie playlists? What about your mp3 playlists? What about the way you spend your time? What about the conversations you have at work? If you don't gather with me, you'll scatter.

But here's what also really grabbed the hold of me as I thought about this passage in verse 26. I don't want to make this a big typology thing and all that, but it's said that he goes and gets seven other spirits. Now seven is a picture of perfection.

Seven days God created the earth and rested, including rested. Seven is a picture of a number that represents perfection. Represents the divine completion.

Here's this unclean spirit that was kicked out of my life. Comes back with seven other spirits. These are attitudes.

I don't want to call spirits as if this is big. I don't want you to get this picture of this pointy ears and red tail. I want to make it much more subtle in which it's an attitude, which it's a mindset, which it's a spirit.

There's a spirit of this world. There's a spirit that has a sense of, I'm okay, I'm good, I'm doing well. It has a sense of divinity.

It has a sense of divineness, but it's an unclean spirit. And this is the kind of spirit that was found in the Pharisees of their day. Think about who the Pharisees were.

These were Pharisees who were following the Bible of that day. These were the people who were some of the most externally pure people. These were the people who probably gave the most time and money to the things of God.

These were the ones that crucified Jesus. We have to keep reminding ourselves that these folks who are so religious in so many ways did the greatest, most evil act that has ever been done. Who did a more evil act? Hitler? Osama Bin Laden? Or what the Pharisees did to the Son of God? If we truly believe that killing the Son of God, Jesus, was the greatest, most evil act ever done, then I must ask myself, who did it? And I must ask myself, is it possible that I have that same attitude? Let's do a case study of those people who killed Jesus.

Where did they spend all their time? In church. It's coming a little bit more closer to home for me. What were they studying all the time? The Bible of their day.

My goodness, that's awfully close. Externally righteous. Seeking to fight against all sin.

Killed the Son of God in the most evil act. These things must sink in. I didn't spend much time thinking about this, so this is not a well-developed thought of teaching.

But I wrote down seven things, seven spirits, that can be very familiar. To those of us who sit in the church. And is not exempt.

But because we're clean and empty, that's what makes us more dangerous to these, more susceptible to these things. One is pride. The unclean spirit of whatever that uncleanness is, comes now with the religious pride.

That still loves self, and that is combined with unbelief. That's the word that I wrote down that is related to pride. I don't believe God's Word.

What does God say about your past? What do you think about your past? What does God say about your sins that you committed 10 years ago? Why are you beating yourself up about it? Because you're proud. You don't believe God. Religious spirit, sitting in the church, constantly saying, God help me, God help me, God help me.

One day I hope I'll be better for the thing I did 10 years ago. You don't need a voice when you have a verse. The verse says, if you come to me, I can cleanse you of all your sins.

Cleanse you. But I keep holding on to it, because of my pride. Self-righteousness, that's another spirit.

Where I justify myself. Self-righteous. I'm the standard.

Other people are more worldly. Other people are fanatics. I'm the standard.

Spirit of self-righteousness. These are the worst spirits than what was in me when I was a worldly person. Legalism, that's another spirit.

Majoring in how much I sacrifice, rather than majoring in compassion. Majoring legalism, following the letter of the law, than bursting with compassion. Matthew chapter 12.

I have some references. I'll say it out here. If it's on the video, you can write it down if you want.

For pride, I wrote on Luke chapter 18, verses 9 through 14, which is the story of the Pharisee and the publican, both standing and praying. That's pride, saying, oh, I'm so glad I'm doing all these things. Meanwhile, the publican is saying, Lord, have mercy on me.

But the story ends by saying the publican went home justifying. Self-righteousness, justifying oneself. That's Luke chapter 16, verse 15.

It said the Pharisees love to justify themselves. Why am I right and why are you wrong? Legalism, majoring in sacrifice and not in compassion. It's Matthew chapter 12.

Jesus said, go and understand what it means. I'm not interested in sacrifice. I'm interested in compassion.

I love the fact that you come early and you stay late and help this church and do this. But you know, underneath all of this, you don't have a compassionate heart. You're not kind.

Or you're kind on Sunday morning, but you're not kind during the week to your children. I love that you sacrifice for my people, but you're not sacrificing for your loved ones. Those are the first three.

Pride, self-righteousness, legalism, judging others. Simon in Luke chapter 7. When you see a woman of the city who's weeping and drying her tears with her hair, and there's so many ways in which we can judge other people. We can judge, you know what the problem with that marriage is? It's that.

You know what the problem with that guy is? It's that. And how often have we been wrong? And we bring our spouses into those conversations and our children are listening in. And we bring our children into those conversations.

So they grow up and become like that, judging others. John chapter 8. Wanting to throw stones at adulterous women. Would we have got it right, dear brothers and sisters? Would we have gotten that right if these Pharisees had come to us and said, I caught a woman caught in adultery.

What are you going to do? Here's what the law says. What are you going to do? Would we be with Jesus? Let me give you the flip side of it. If you saw money changers in the temple, will you be with Jesus and take a cord and kick him out? We see hypocrites standing in the pulpit of God's word.

Would you say you're a brood of vipers? So Jesus said, Matthew chapter 23. You have a special place in hell for you. So he says, you're whitewashed fools.

This is the things Jesus said. So it's not just Jesus' meek and mild, sweet holding sheep picture of Jesus. Both and.

And let us ask ourselves, as we heard from today too, we want to be like Jesus in everything. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all have this ambition that Jesus would be formed in us. Let us study who Jesus was and say, Lord, am I looking completely like Jesus? Will I truly stand with the adulterous woman? Will I truly stand against the Pharisees? Lord, how do I know the difference? Where to stand against sin? Where to show compassion? These are spirits that can cling so closely to us in the church.

Lovers of money. That's the fifth one. Lovers of money.

That's what it says about the Pharisees. Luke 16, 14. They were lovers of money.

I don't need to talk much about it. 1 Timothy 6 talks about the love of money is a root of all evil. We should hate all forms of greed.

We can meditate on that phrase that Jesus said. I think it's Luke chapter 12. Hate all forms of greed.

Just unpack that in your life. Am I greedy? Is that why I'm jealous? Is that why I snapped at that person? Is that why I shut down that story? And he was in the middle of saying it. I acted like I was not impressed.

Is it because I'm envious or greedy for honor? Honor-seeking. That's a big one. It's a deep one.

Seeking the honor of people. I cannot be a servant of God if I seek the honor of man. It says in Luke chapter 12, verse 42 to 43.

They sought the honor of men, these Pharisees. This is the case study of these Pharisees who ended up doing the worst act ever done. Culture today is studying Adolf Hitler and saying, look at the parallels between how Hitler was in the 40s and see how the parallels are in culture today.

I see articles about that. Well, let me commend to you the Pharisees who did an act million times worse than Hitler ever did. How do you compare killing six million humans to killing God? It's one Jesus, but it was God.

That's what makes us realize that we are the ones who are in great danger. Let's really embrace that thought that the folks who killed Jesus, the spirit of what was in, God hates the sin, not the sinner. The spirit that was in the Pharisees is million times worse than the spirit that was in Adolf Hitler.

I must really grab a hold of that and I'll be saved from killing Christ and then from killing anybody else. Honor-seeking, honor-seeking. These Pharisees loved the approval of men.

They loved honor. And we must say, Lord, there's a spirit of that and I must hate it because that spirit comes in me and I can kill Christ. And the last one is hypocrisy.

Differing weights in private versus public. Differing weights is an abomination to God. You're this way in church and you're that way at home.

You're this way in church and you're that way when you're alone in your thoughts. You'll cover your head with your head covering physically in church, but you're home, my goodness, no chance of you submitting to your husband. And men, you uncover your heads in the church because you're supposed to say you're going to give all glory to God, but all week you're just seeking to get glory to yourself.

Hypocrites, hypocrisy. I'm not calling anybody that. This is the spirit that's inside all of us, especially to those who sit in God's house, hear God's word and are very serious about following God.

Seven spirits worse than the one that God kicked out of us. Spirits of worldliness and spirits of all those things. Let us be careful that we don't get seven worse spirits than what was in us before.

This doesn't make us now go and act out crazy and start punching people in the face and all that. It's worse than that. We look okay.

We look fine. We sit in the church and people are saying, he's a good brother. He's a good sister.

Inside, God says it's worse than it was in the beginning. We heard that passage, I believe in Matthew chapter. No, let's just finish before we go to Matthew chapter 21.

Luke chapter 21. Right after that, verse 26. Right after that, Luke 11, verse 27 and 28.

It came about while he was saying these things. One of the women in the crowd said, blessed is the womb that bore you and the breast on which you nursed. Jesus saw a point of distraction.

They're saying, wow, you're such a lucky man because your parents must have raised you right. I'm glad God gave your mother such wisdom to raise you because now you're speaking against these Pharisees. Right, Jesus, give it to them.

These Pharisees that are lording it over us. Jesus responds right away and saying, hey look, so for some of us who are not Pharisees, we're just utterly worldly. We're loving the world and like, thank you for pitting the Pharisees in the church.

Jesus also says, on the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and do it. That's what matters. Has God been speaking to you about something? Are we doing it? God has been speaking to us in what we've been hearing today.

Do we want to be like Jesus? Do we want to watch programs with Jesus? Do we want to speak with our wife like Jesus would speak to our wife? Do we want to hang around our coworkers the way Jesus would hang around our coworkers? Beware of evil spirits of pride and hypocrisy and all those others coming in, but also do it. Have you been listening to messages, sermons, and God's spoken to you through something today? Has a godly brother come and spoke and said something to you? Blessed are those who hear it and observe it. In Matthew chapter 11, 21, we heard that story about the two sons, one who said, I'll do it, but didn't end up doing it.

And the another person who said he was not going to do it, but ended up doing it. It's Matthew chapter 21, verse 28. The man had two sons and 29, he said, I will serve, but he did not go.

And the other one said, I will not, but yet he went, regretted it and went. Which of the two did the will of the father? The latter. Now, here's the inference out of it from verse 31.

Listen to this carefully. This is the Jesus who was killed by these religious people. Truly, truly, I say to you that the tax collectors and harlots, harlots, prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.

Before you who are sitting in the church, before you go to church every Sunday, read God's word every day, who've been listening to sermons, identify all the false prophets, identify all the true prophets, that man is prosperity preacher, that man is just a worldly man. That church is just fluff. These preachers are great, but you've lost your first love.

Repent from the point which you've fallen. So God's calling us back. God's always calling us back to say, beware of the spirits, these seven more evil spirits that can be in us.

Let me repeat them. Pride and self-righteousness, legalism, judging others, lovers of money, honor-seeking, hypocrisy. Those are the spirits that were in the Pharisees, and those spirits are what caused the Pharisees to kill Jesus.

Let us ask ourselves, Lord, am I going to be ready for your coming? Am I ready for your soon coming, or am I going to be an embarrassment? To you, because I have my heart. You know what Jesus said to the church in Laodicea? I wish you were hot or cold. I wish you were like the tax collector in the harlots, because it'll be easier for me to get your attention.

Jesus is saying that consistently from Matthew all the way to Revelation. It's worse off for some of us who are Pharisees, hearing God's word, listening to sermons, constantly going to Bible studies, doing all of these things, but not obeying. And the areas that God has been telling us for weeks and months and years, being hypocrites, seeking honor.

Let's take a few minutes and let's sing a song, a chorus that we know. I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back.

And here's what I want you to think about when you say no turning back. I want you to think about the time when, I want us to think about the times when we are in the car and we're cut off. I want us to think about the times when our spouse, who we used to be so accommodating to, is now getting on our nerves.

I want us to think about that speech of ours that is still rough on the edges, like a snake coming out every now and then to just bite somebody, poison somebody, and then goes back and acts all sweet and quiet, cuddly little snake to the next month. When provoked, it'll come and bite you. No turning back then.

Lord Jesus, I have decided to follow you. The cross before me, the world behind me as we heard, let us think about the things that are in our playlist, let us think about the things that we have. How much, Lord Jesus, do I want to be like you? I want to hate the works of those who fall away.

I want to dwell on the things that you consider worthy of praise. We all can do a better work in that. The world behind me, the cross before me, and then though none go with me, still I will follow.

And I want us to think about when your spouse is not going with you. When your spouse is resorting to anger. When your loved ones are saying, let's just watch this movie.

Let's do this. Even if you're the wife, though none go with me, I'm going to follow Jesus. I can't watch this.

There'll be two in a bed. One will be taken. One will be left, it says in Matthew chapter 24.

Who is that referring to? A husband and a wife. There'll be two in a bed. One will be taken.

One will be left. Because both look fine. Both look like a happy marriage.

But God looked at the heart. Though none go with me, still I will follow.

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