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Sermon Notes

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Cleaned Up But Not Converted

Matthew 12:43-45

Introduction: A “God-shaped Vacuum”

Blaise Pascal: great Seventeenth-century scientist, mathematician, theologian. Did careful studies on the nature of fluids in containers, and also of vacuums. Also was a passionate mystical Christian who believed there was a deep hunger for God inside each one of us

“There is within each one of us a God-shaped vacuum”

What was meant for God, however, is often filled with other things...

Worst of all, moral reformation: convicted of sin, we decide to “clean up our acts”... turn over a new leaf, as an act of our will, to decide to stop sinning! The empty place inside filled with self-righteousness

Context

Conflict with the Scribes and Pharisees

Demand for a sign

Jesus’ incredible river of miracles... more casting out of demons than any other sign

Binding the Strong Man... one demon driven out after another

Ascribing Christ’s miracles to Beelzebul

Christ discusses the future of Israel by making an analogy: from one demon-possessed man to the whole nation... “That is how it will be with this generation”... it’s going to be worse after I leave than before I came

“When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. 44 Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the

final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."

Key: **"Unoccupied"**... The individual healed man who does not repent and trust Christ is "unoccupied"... a picture of moral reformation without the New Birth. In the end, it will be worse for that man

So also for the whole nation... from the part to the whole... from the individual to the entire Jewish nation... morally, physically "cleaned up" by Christ's visit... but still "unoccupied"

I. Demons Cannot Occupy to Satisfy

II. Morality and Worldly Accomplishment Cannot Occupy to Satisfy

III. Christ Alone Can Occupy to Satisfy

I. Demons Cannot Occupy to Satisfy

A. Christ Teaches Us About Demons

1. No one knows more about demons than Christ
2. Christ knows His enemy better than they know themselves
3. Three brief verses gives us a rare and astonishing glimpse into the heart of a demon

B. Twelve Insights Into Demonic Nature

1. Spirits
 - a. non-physical... not made up of atoms and molecules
 - b. like God in this respect... free from fatigue, immortal, not constrained by space
 - c. for this reason, many can indwell one person
2. Unclean
 - a. Greek description: translated here "evil spirit" actually "unclean"
 - b. word implies character: "corrupt", "wicked" "anti-God", loving what is filthy, despicable and evil

- c. word also implies history of actions: involved in dirty deeds, polluting themselves and everything they touch
- d. opposite is “clean” or “pure”

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

John 13:10-11 Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

Demons are the very picture of filth from God’s pure perspective

God’s eyes are so pure He cannot look on evil... and the devil and His unclean spirits are the most impure and unclean beings in the universe

3. Able to Indwell a Man

v. 43 “When an evil spirit comes out of a man.”

- a. this is where we get a sense of being “indwelt” by a demon
 - b. the demon was “in” the man spiritually... living with him, controlling his thoughts and actions... in some sense possessing him as though he were his own
 - c. perhaps it comes from the lust demons have to experience physical life as do the children of Adam
 - d. mostly they yearn to possess a man’s heart... to be his purpose for living... to drive him to restless, relentless sin, the way he is restless and relentless
- ### 4. Powerless to Stay if Christ Drives Him Out
- a. remember, the demon has no desire to leave and soon wants to come back
 - b. what makes him leave? The terrifying power of God the Son!!
 - c. as powerful as demons are, their power is nothing compared to Christ
- ### 5. Restless: Roaming, Wandering, Desiring Rest

Matthew 12:43 "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.

- a. unfulfilled: Not finding what they seek
- b. restlessly roaming the earth in search of rest

Job 1:7 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

- c. rest is the very thing they will never find... more on this in a moment
- 6. Not Omnipresent... they are here, or they are there
 - a. unlike God, who is also a spirit, demons are not omnipresent
 - b. they have only one locality at a time... thus they roam too and fro over the earth
 - c. they move fast, they have no fatigue, no physical impediments can stop them... but they must occupy one place, one home of rest
 - d. furthermore, they are restrained constantly by the will of God... the limits God puts on them

Job 1:10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

- 7. Intelligent: having a plan

vs. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order.

- a. demons are thinking beings, deciding what to do
- b. the devil is spoken of as having schemes, plots, plans
- 8. Self-determined: "I will..."
 - a. the nature of demonic opposition is never to say "What does the Lord will?"
 - b. rather, he's always saying "I will..." "I will..." "I will..."

Isaiah 14:13-14 You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost

heights of the sacred mountain. 14 I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

So also the self-determining human being... always "I will..."

James 4:13-15 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

9. Possessive: "My house"

NASB Matthew 12:44 "Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'

- a. NIV leaves it out
- b. this demon feels a sense of ownership over the house... more specifically, over the man
- c. the devil is also very possessive, very protective of his possessions

Luke 4:5-7 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

This is what makes Christ's expulsion of the demons such an act of power:

Luke 11:21-22 "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. 22 But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils."

This demon still feels a sense of ownership over the man he formerly possessed... he wants to go back and reclaim his lost territory

10. Relentless: Persistent... They Return Later

"I will return..."

- a. the devil and his angels are incredibly persistent
- b. if you resist the devil, he will flee from you

- c. BUT he's coming back... again and again and again

Luke 4:13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

- d. the persistence of the devil in a losing cause is one of the more discouraging aspects of being a Christian
- e. we don't defeat the devil's temptations just once... but must be determined to fight to the end of our lives!

11. Undaunted by good order, moral reformation

vs. 44 When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order.

- a. the house is all cleaned up... its swept clean and put in order
- b. the devil thrives in bringing chaos where once there was good order
- c. this demon is not intimidated at all by the fact that this man has "cleaned up his life"... he plunges in with all haste
- d. the real issue is that the house is **UNOCCUPIED**... this man has not been born again!!

12. Cooperative With Other Demons

vs. 45 "Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there."

- a. demons cooperate with other demons to make a monstrously huge impact on the world
- b. this demonic cooperation is the essence of Satan's "kingdom"
- c. so essential is this demonic cooperation that Jesus said

Matthew 12:26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?

- d. multiple demons inhabiting one person has already been seen with the demonic horde called "Legion"

Mark 5:9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many."

- e. some commentators say “seven other demons” means “complete, total control by demons”... number seven the number of completeness

13. Varying in Wickedness

- a. “more wicked than itself” means there are gradations of wickedness even in Satan’s kingdom
- b. some demons are simply more vile than others
- c. in any case, the moral reformation without regeneration results in far greater evil in the end

vs. 45 Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

C. Why Demons Cannot Occupy to Satisfy

1. Demons DO Occupy People... they also drive, tempt, entice, lure, seduce, and persuade people to join them in uncleanness
2. They entice people to commit sin, so they will be just like them... demons want us like they are
3. In enticing us to follow their ways, they make us restless, yearning, hungry beings... always eating but never satisfied... they make us demonic roamers of the earth

Genesis 4:12-14 When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. 14 Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

The words “restless wanderer on the earth” are almost exactly like Satan’s full-time occupation... Satan roams too and fro over the earth, always seeking and never finding... literally he HAS NO HOME, NO REST!!!

Cain also will restlessly roam the earth

Literally it means to be a vagabond, to HAVE NO HOME, NO REST!!!

So also when Israel refused to enter the Promised Land they were condemned to wander around aimlessly until that generation died out... the HAD NO HOME, NO REST!!!

David spoke of the evil men of his day in exactly these terms: restless, animal-like searching:

Psalm 59:14-15 They return at evening, snarling like dogs, and prowl about the city. 15 They wander about for food and howl if not satisfied.

So also Jeremiah spoke of sinful Judah after they had been expelled from the Promised Land because of sin:

Lamentations 4:14-16 Now they grope through the streets like men who are blind. They are so defiled with blood that no one dares to touch their garments. "Go away! You are unclean!" men cry to them. "Away! Away! Don't touch us!" When they flee and wander about, people among the nations say, "They can stay here no longer." 16 The LORD himself has scattered them; he no longer watches over them.

The theme is clear: a consistent patter of restlessness, of roaming, of searching but not finding, of hungering and consuming but never being satisfied...of having NO REST, NO HOME!!! It is demonic to its core

Why does this happen? It happens to demons and to men alike for the same reason: they have rejected the place of true rest... the Kingdom of God

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

5. Demons CANNOT occupy to satisfy because they are yearning and empty themselves

6. The world they offer to us day after day is their attempt at satisfaction... and it is empty

7. They drive people to fill the emptiness inside with:

- Lust: the promise of satisfaction through physical pleasure
- Ambition: the promise of satisfaction through earthly power
- Entertainment: the promise of satisfaction through mental stimulation apart from achievement
- Materialism: the promise of satisfaction through accumulation

They are ALL false mirages...

Lust is like slaying your raging thirst with salt-water... that is true of all of these.

Driving after what the demons suggest to fill your vacuum only leads to greater dissatisfaction

Matthew 12:43 "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it."

II. Morality and Worldly Accomplishment Cannot Occupy to Satisfy

vs. 44 *When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order.*

A. Free of Demonic Influence... BUT Also Free of the Lord: “Unoccupied”

1. Unoccupied: key word

2. Meaning in Greek:

Word means “to have leisure for”, “be available for”, “to be free for” *scholazo*: from which we get “school” or “scholastics”... these were people who were free from menial tasks and labor so they could devote themselves to higher pursuits... open, available FOR SOMETHING... ready to go!

“Liberal arts”: arts pursued by people who were free from daily concern for livelihood and could pursue higher things

“Leisure class”: those with free time to pursue higher callings

Free FOR something... free FOR education

Or, with a house, free for a new occupant

3. 1 Corinthians 7:5 Free to pray

1 Corinthians 7:5 Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Connected to 1 Corinthians 7:5 “to devote yourselves to prayer” ... free from other distractions so that you can be devoted to prayer.

Always a sense of freedom SO THAT... freedom FOR something

In this case, the man has been freed from the influence of the demon and stands free for another occupant... but that other occupant never comes. The demon sees His opportunity and pounces

Freedom has no value by itself... Christ frees the demon-possessed man, but he must use his freedom to repent and believe in Christ

Instead, he uses it for moral reformation:

B. Moral Reformation: Swept Clean

1. Spirit is “unclean”... but this house is swept clean
2. The effects of the demon’s past occupation are over
3. Demons bring disorder, chaos, mess
4. Being in his right mind, the man now cleans his house
5. BUT since the house is “unoccupied” by the Lord, this is nothing more than moral reformation

- The alcoholic stops drinking
- The drug addict stops using
- The user of internet porn or the adulterer, afraid of public shame, stops his bad habits
- The spouse abuser, embarrassed by the loss of reputation, reforms his ways
- The driven businessman, about to lose his family, simplifies his life and spends more time with his kids
- The cigarette smoker, with early signs of emphysema, quits cold turkey
- The embezzler, terrified of his friend’s conviction, cleans his own business of corruption
- The glutton, afraid of a heart attack, changes his diet, begins to exercise, and all his friend tell him he looks great
- The guilty sinner, afraid of the consequences of his life, prays some prayer, signs some card, and starts going to church... but all without true repentance and faith in Christ

“SCARED STRAIGHT!!” Moral reformation apart from the Lord

- Or simply, the Benjamin Franklin style moralist just leads a disciplined, self-controlled life... a life of self-actualization... good eating, good exercise, good business habits, “early to bed, early to rise”, making the most of every minute to achieve the goals he wants to achieve
- NOW all of these reformations are good things, and the very things that Christ works in us after we’ve been truly born again... but they can be imitated without Christ

6. Favorite form of moral reformation: religion!!

- Long lists of do’s and don’ts... if you keep them, you can boast to yourself of your moral purity

- Pharisees houses were “swept clean”... they didn’t break any outward commandments
- They offered long and showy prayers
- They announced their almsgiving with trumpets
- They fasted twice a week and made a big show of it

BUT they were “unoccupied” by the Lord... not born again, not indwelt by His Spirit, they looked good on the outside but were filthy on the inside.

Matthew 15:8 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

C. Worldly Accomplishment: Good Order, Cosmetic Adornments

1. Word related to “cosmetic”... it means adornment, beautification
2. Can also be careful ordering, structure, organization
3. Related to moral reformation... perhaps with ambitions in the world
4. Perhaps it can even represent achievements, accolades, awards, promotions, ambitions realized
5. The house, the life, the career... all of it in good working order

BUT IT’S ALL EMPTY, for the Lord is not there

Moral reformation, even through religion, cannot occupy to satisfy

Worldly organization and adornment through achievement cannot occupy to satisfy

D. The Last Shall Be Worse Than the First

KJV Matthew 12:45 and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

1. Actually, moral reformation and religiosity without new birth and indwelling Christ is WORSE than simply being a sinner who never went through this process
2. To realize something is wrong with your life and to fix it yourself apart from Christ is merely more of the same... demonic arrogance, self-reliance

2 Peter 2:20-22 If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. 21 It would have been better for them not to

have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

3. The more power of the Gospel you experience without being born again, the more judgment you will face on Judgment Day

E. The Future of Israel According to Christ

1. Demonic strongholds destroyed all over Israel
2. One demon after another driven out... sent into arid places to look for rest
3. BUT many of those people never trusted in Christ
4. The nation as a whole rejected Christ... the soul of his generation was UNOCCUPIED with Christ

Matthew 23:37-39 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. 38 Look, your house is left to you desolate.

Desolate means unoccupied

39 For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

The very next verse, Christ leaves the Temple, never to return. His next comment predicts the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem itself

5. Soon after Christ ascended to heaven, the demons flocked back into Israel to reclaim their lost territory
6. The Roman desecration and destruction of the temple was ample proof that God was not indwelling Israel any longer... it was the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by the Prophet Daniel

III. Christ Alone Can Occupy to Satisfy

A. Christ Intends to Occupy Our Hearts

1. When anyone repents and trusts Christ, Christ comes and lives inside Him
2. Scripture actually teaches that the Trinity lives within every believer
3. Christ alone can occupy our hearts with holiness, with love for God, with love for neighbor, with yearning after righteousness
4. This is the true Christian life... Born Again by His Spirit

B. His Indwelling Brings the Deepest Satisfaction a Person Can Know

IV. Applications

A. Moral Reformation Without Christ Leads to Hell

B. The Human Heart Was Meant to be Occupied... Free from Bondage to Be Devoted to God

C. Limits of Freedom and Choice... politically, religiously

1. “Freedom to choose” is an idol frequently connected with abortion rights
2. Some people think of political freedom as the great gift of America to the world
3. BUT total freedom—freedom to do whatever you want whenever you want—was put on display after our troops had toppled Saddam Hussein... anarchy, small riots, looting, vigilante groups, reprisals by mob rule... is this freedom?
4. Is not freedom meant to be FOR something... freedom to love and serve Christ!
5. Freed from the demons, Israel should have become filled with Christ... instead, they were unoccupied, swept clean and put in order... waiting for the avalanche of demons about to pour back into the country as soon as Christ left
6. Freedom to choose is not freedom to sin... that is actually bondage to the flesh and the devil
7. Submission to Christ’s easy yoke is the only true freedom this world offers

D. Does Christ Dwell in your hearts by faith?

Ephesians 3:16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Ephesians 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

E. Idle hands, devil's workshop... 1 Cor. 7:5... be occupied in the Lord's work

1. We are meant to be "occupied"... devoted to the Lord's work
2. We are most vulnerable when we are idle... unoccupied with Christ's kingdom
3. "Idle hands are the devil's workshop"... so are idle minds and idle hearts
4. Fill your mind with pure truth

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things.

5. Fill your mouth with pure blessing

Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Colossians 3:16 sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

6. Fill your days with useful service to Christ

Ephesians 5:15 Be very careful, then, how you live-- not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.

KJV Luke 19:13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

This is Christ's command to us... be filled with Christ, be filled with the Spirit, fill your minds with God's word, fill your mouths with blessings for those who hear you, fill your days with useful service, until your journey on earth is through

