

# Truth for Today

*The Bible Explained*

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## Luke's Gospel: Jesus and the crowds (Luke 11:14-36)

Welcome to *Truth for Today*, the Bible Explained. In this present series we are going through Luke's Gospel and the title of today's talk is "Jesus and the crowds". If you have a Bible and it is safe to do so, please turn to Luke 11:14-36.

Please note that Mark 3:22-30 and Matthew 12:22-45 are witnesses of the same incidents. By reading all the accounts, you will get a clearer picture of the scene. Just some facts about Luke and his Gospel: Luke was a doctor; he was the only writer in the Bible who was not a Jew. Luke's Gospel pictures the Lord Jesus Christ as the perfect man. Luke points out the moral perfections and the tender sympathies of the blessed Saviour of men as He walked in this world.

Wherever Jesus went there were always crowds following Him. Why? For all different reasons I suppose! Some followed Jesus because they wanted to witness the miracles He did. Some followed Jesus because they believed that they would be healed if Jesus touched them or spoke to them. Some followed Jesus to hear what He had to say. Some followed Jesus to try and accuse Him of breaking the so called Jewish law. Some just got caught up in the euphoria of the crowd. Some just wanted to see Jesus because He was famous. But, thank God, there were a few who followed Jesus because they loved Him.

Recently we went for a day to the British Open Golf Championship at Carnoustie in Scotland. We planned our journey knowing that there would be many people travelling to the small seaside village in Fife. Everything was well organised, and we were relieved to find that getting to the gates was relatively smooth. Once inside the gates, the crowds were spread out over the golf course because people wanted to follow their favourite players. I had my favourites, so we followed them for a while before taking our seats in one of the grandstands.

Sitting in the grandstand allowed us to see many players coming through and allowed us to take in some of the atmosphere. It was interesting to listen to the comments people made about different players. Some did not like certain individuals because of things they had said or done. On the other hand, some players were liked by everyone. Some were respected and warmly applauded because of their success in the past. Each player had one goal, to win the major championship. Whoever achieved this would be famous and be remembered in the history of golf, but there could only be one winner.

Most groups had a reasonable following, but one group had a massive following. The crowd was five and six deep, people were running forward to position themselves to get a good view. They all wanted to see one man! Why did so many in the crowd want to see this one man? I cannot speak for others or read their thoughts, but I am sure they had their own reasons for doing so. Undoubtedly, he was a famous legend of the game, he had won many titles. But he was just a man; there was certainly nothing special about his character or behaviour!

The illustration I have given you is so that you can picture in your mind the vast crowds that followed Jesus. Jesus was certainly a special Man and the crowds had good reason to follow such a wonderful person. There are many instances in the Bible of crowds following Jesus. There was the incident with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). He was too small to see Jesus because of the crowds, so he had to climb up a sycamore tree to gain a vantage point (Luke 19:4). There was also the woman who had a problem with her blood; she crawled through the crowds just to just touch the hem of Jesus' garment because she believed this would heal her, and it did (Mark 5:25-34).

Another example was when Jesus fed the five thousand men plus woman and children with five loaves and two small fish (Luke 9:10-17). Jesus drew crowds everywhere He went. Jesus loved people and throughout His life He healed many physically and even brought some back to life. Jesus the perfect, righteous son of God wanted to heal people spiritually. He wanted them to have life, eternal life through faith in Himself.

The last example is a sad one. Picture the baying crowd at the trial of Jesus (John 19:1-16). They were being instigated by the religious leaders as they cried out, "*Away with Him, we do not want this man to reign over us*" (John 19:15, see Acts 21:36). Imagine the snide comments coming from the individuals in the crowd. The people of Jerusalem were fickle. Only a few days earlier Jesus was welcomed by crowds who lined the street as He entered

Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-11), but now they wanted His blood. Jesus came into this world to reveal the heart of a loving God, but He was rejected and crucified.

Back to the incident in Luke 11:14-36. I want to point out a few things. First, we see the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ displayed to all but rejected by many. Ephesians 2:8-10 reads: *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."* In 2 Corinthians 8:9 we read: *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich."* God does not only want to forgive us, He wants to give us many blessings in Christ Jesus.

Secondly, we see the remarkable change in the demonic man when Jesus cast out the demon (Luke 11:14). It was so impressive that no one in the crowd could deny it. But, instead of realising who Jesus was, they accused Him of casting out demons in Satan's name (Luke 11:15). In John 8:12, Jesus said; *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life."* It was clear that Jesus was the light in a dark world, but men's eyes just could not see it. The common people just did not recognise Jesus. The crowd was being orchestrated by the religious leaders, men who never stopped trying to find ways of accusing Jesus.

Thirdly, not everyone refused Jesus. A woman in the crowd perceived something of His excellence and pronounced His mother to be blessed (Luke 11:27). This He accepted, for the first word of His reply was, *"Yes"* (Luke 11:28). Yet He indicated something more blessed still. A true spiritual condition for us lies in the receiving and keeping of the Word of God. Jesus wanted the crowd to hear, accept, and believe, what He had to say.

Jesus did not come just to perform miracles or to show His power and greatness. Jesus came *"to seek and to save the lost"* (Luke 19:10). Dear friend, I pray that you may be the lone voice in the crowd who is prepared to recognise who Jesus is and accept what He has done for you. He died to pay the penalty of your sins.

Fourthly, Jesus knew what every individual in the crowd was thinking, because He is God. Look at Luke 11:17: *"He, Jesus, knowing their thoughts..."* Jesus knew what they were thinking and was able to answer them. It is quite sobering to think that Jesus knows your thoughts and your motives. Hebrews 4:12; *"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."*

The verses in our study today, Luke 11:14-36, make it clear that there is a spiritual battle raging, and there are two sides and only two sides. The two sides are headed up by Jesus and by Satan. Jesus came into the world totally committed in obedience to His Father to give Himself as an offering for your sins.

God loves you, dear friend! God has proved how much He loves you by sending His only Son into this world to be rejected by mankind and ultimately suffer and die on the cross. Don't you appreciate how much God loves you? God has shown us great mercy when we deserved to be punished for our sins. But, even more wonderful, consider His grace. God does not only want to save us from certain judgment, but He wants to give us many spiritual blessings on earth and eternal life in His mansions in heaven.

The motives of Satan are the complete opposite. Satan and his demonic forces are committed to the ultimate harm and destruction of humanity. Satan is powerful; we are no match on our own for him. The Bible says that he is the *"prince of the power of the air"* (Ephesians 2:2).

Ephesians 6:12 speaks of the heavenly war that is raging. It speaks about the wiles of the devil. Satan comes at us in various guises. The Bible says that he comes as a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:7), fierce and recognisable, but at other times as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) to quietly seduce us.

Ephesians 6:10-20 explains how we can stand against the attacks of the evil one, by putting on the whole armour of God. God's armour consists of truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the word of God. Even Jesus was tempted (or tested) by Satan in Matthew 4:1-11, but Jesus rebuffed him by quoting from the word of God.

This battle has only one winner, the Lord Jesus Christ. Through His death, Jesus Christ has already defeated death, the scourge of mankind. He has annulled death for those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus. And the fear of the grave has gone for the believer in Christ. The believer's hope is in resurrection and eternal life found only in Christ Jesus. Satan today has almost a free hand in this world, but he knows that he is a defeated foe. Satan knows that one day Jesus will crush him and cast him in judgment into the lake of fire for ever. But, while Satan is free, he will reap havoc on humanity, so beware!

Jesus Christ has authority over Satan's power. In Bible times there were several Jewish exorcists who tried to cast out demons by special potions or magical procedures. Jesus simply spoke the word. Jesus was casting out a demon in a

dumb person and when the demon was removed the dumb spoke. The crowds accused Jesus of casting out the demon through Beelzebul, the chief of the devils. Why would Satan want to cast out one of his own from a person? How would his kingdom stand if this were so? Jesus told them that He was casting out demons in the power of God and that His kingdom had come upon them. Jesus went on to say how much stronger He was compared to Satan and how that one day He would attack Satan and conquer him. This will happen when the Lord comes to take control of this world and reign in righteousness.

Jesus made it clear to the crowds that there are two kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan (Luke 11:16-23). You are in one or the other. There is no middle ground. If you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are a child of God, a citizen of the kingdom of God. If you are not, by default you are a child of Satan. Jesus says, "*you are either with Me or against Me*" (Luke 11:23). You are either on Jesus' side or Satan's side. Where do you stand?

Listen to the word of God. Ephesians 2:1-10 speaks of the change that takes place when you move from Satan's control to becoming a child of God; "*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience - among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*" (Ephesians 2:1-10).

Each one of us has a spiritual void that needs to be filled. Jesus said that when the unclean spirit leaves a person, it will come back again with more spirits to try and enter again into your life (see Luke 11:24-26). Jesus encourages the crowd to hear the word of God and keep it (Luke 11:28). So, once you have heard and believed the word of God, the Holy Spirit will enter your life and live there. The Holy Spirit living in us will guide and direct us in life, but we need to keep our lives clean. The only way to do this is by dependence on God, in prayer, reading the Bible and applying what we read to our lives.

As the crowd grew, more and more people tried to get a glimpse of Jesus and to hear what He was saying. Suddenly there was a lone voice that cried out from amongst the crowd. It was a woman, who is not named (Luke 11:27). She cries out, blessing the Mother of Jesus.

This woman seemed to be the only one in the huge crowd that recognised to some extent who Jesus was. She was giving praise to the Lord Jesus. This took courage and conviction for this woman to stand out from the crowd. The religious rulers could have arrested her and whisked her away to prison for supporting Jesus.

To stand up for Jesus takes courage. Jesus promised Christians that they would suffer for His sake. Jesus suffered in this world so if you are a true Christian you will suffer also. Suffering can be seen all over the world where Christians are persecuted for speaking up. Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 16:24-26 "*to take up the cross and follow Him*" no matter the cost.

The section we are studying finishes with the Lord Jesus reminding them of the prophet Jonah (Luke 11:29-32). When Jonah went into Nineveh he was a sign to them from God that they were wicked and had sinned. All the people of Nineveh, accepted this, and they repented. God forgave them, and He spared the city.

The crowd had swollen to a multitude and Jesus told the crowd that they were a wicked generation and He was the sign to them that they needed to repent. Jesus told them that He was greater than Jonah (Luke 11:32). But, unlike in the days of Jonah the Lord Jesus was ignored, cast aside and ridiculed. Generation after generation of mankind has continued to reject and ignore the Lord Jesus.

Dear friend, are you on the Lord's side? You may be one of these people who are generally happy, content, having a good life, a life that is generally peaceful, no real need as such. But, maybe you don't like to admit that you have a great spiritual void that is aching to be filled.

Dear friend, can I encourage you to step out from the crowd and accept the Lord Jesus as your Saviour. He will fill, thrill and satisfy your soul.

Next time you are in a crowd, think about how many are heading down the broad road that leads to destruction (see Matthew 7:13). Then think about the one or two that are on the narrow way, those who are swimming against the tide

in this world, but who have a bright eternal future with Christ. Stop for a moment, stop denying God and listen! Accept and believe the words of Jesus or you will spend eternity with Satan and his angels in the lake of fire.

I pray today that God will bless you and bring you to an understanding of His mercy, His love and His grace. Amen.

Thank you for listening to this *Truth for Today* talk in the series Luke's Gospel, talk number 1065, Jesus and the crowds.

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