

A threefold wonder is called the work of the devil

Matthew 12. vv. 22-45

Mark 3. vv. 20-30

Luke 11 vv. 14-36

It seems that after the feast in the house of Simon the Pharisee, which I told you about in the last chapter, the Lord Jesus left Capernaum and preached again in the cities and villages of Galilee.

How long He was away we do not know, but suddenly He returns to the city and enters one of the houses. Some think that it was Peter's house which He entered, but the Bible tells us nothing about that. It could have been.

It is not long before the whole city knows that Jesus is back again, and so many people come that the Lord Jesus and His disciples have no time even to eat, though they are tired and hungry from their journey. Again there are Scribes and Pharisees also present. Of course! They are always there. Not because they believed in Jesus, but in order to find something of which they could accuse Him. That is what they were still lying in wait for.

Yes, even Scribes from Judea, from Jerusalem have come, to spy on Him. They seem to want to incite the Galilean Pharisees against Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus does not send all these people away by telling them that He must first have something to eat, no, He lets the food stand and begins to preach. Neither does He reproach the Scribes and Pharisees for sitting there with evil hearts.

While He sits down, surrounded by so many, a sadly afflicted man is brought to Him. He is devil-possessed, that is, someone who is completely controlled by Satan. This man is moreover blind and dumb.

Can you imagine a more unfortunate creature? To be blind alone is terrible. To be dumb is also a great affliction. This man is both at once. Poor man.

The multitude waits expectantly to see what will happen. Will Jesus be able to help this man also? ... Will that not be too much for Him? Probably some shook their heads and thought: "No, He cannot do that."

What? ... Can Jesus not do it? ... Is there anything too hard for the Son of God? ... Not able? ... Just look what happens. The sadly afflicted, pitiful man is healed in a moment at the mighty word of the Lord Jesus. The King of kings performs on him three miracles at once. The devil is cast out; the blind eyes are opened and the silent tongue is loosened.

With gleaming eyes the man looks about him and speaks. Not confused words which none can follow, not hoarse screams, but calm, intelligent speech. He sees the people around him, and he is rid of that terrible devilish spirit.

All who are present see and hear that this man is completely restored. The multitude in that house is deeply impressed. The Pharisees and Scribes too are amazed and they feel inwardly that this is something extraordinary. This great three-fold wonder must have come about through a higher power. They too are for a moment undoubtedly impressed.

Full of wonder the Jews look at each other and say: "Is not this the Son of David?" By that they meant "Could He not be the Messiah? When we see all His miracles, and what has happened now, then it can hardly be denied that He is the Messiah." They begin to have doubts.

The Pharisees and Scribes hear that too. They understand those words. They see the amazement of the multitude. Then their hearts are filled with envy and blind hatred. Instead of confessing their unbelief with sorrow, they look upon Him in anger. Oh, the people must not believe in Jesus of Nazareth. The people must not acknowledge Jesus as the long promised Messiah. What can they do to prevent that happening?

Then they think of a devilish plan. They will try to ridicule Jesus. Against their better judgment they will try to take away from the people the effect of this miracle. They stop at nothing to achieve this end.

At once they turn towards the assembled people and say mockingly and with a voice full of contempt: "Oh, do you know how it is that He can cast out devils? ... We can tell you. He can only do it because He himself is possessed of devils. He casts out devils by the prince of the devils." They smile scornfully.

Children, isn't it terrible? Isn't it awful? ... How dare they? They themselves know better. What has just happened is not the work of one possessed, but it is GOD'S hand. Yet they have the audacity to call the work of God, devil's work. Oh, these Scribes and Pharisees will dare to say anything. Their hatred to the Lord Jesus is so great, that they are prepared against their own better judgment to ridicule the work of the Holy Ghost. They are saying openly that Jesus is a servant of Satan.

The Lord Jesus knows what they are thinking, hears what they are saying, and replies: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to

desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand; and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?"

It is as though the Lord Jesus says: "What you are saying so mockingly is a lie. I have not restored that poor man through the devil, but through the Spirit of God."

Immediately the Lord Jesus warns the many Jews who are sitting there, not to join these Pharisees in their mockery. Those evil, hate-blinded elders of the Jews are purposely blaspheming the work of God. This is the sin against the Holy Ghost which can never be forgiven. Anyone who sins against the Holy Ghost CANNOT be converted. Such people never repent of sin, but they go on scoffing until death comes. For such people the time of grace is past, even whilst they are still here on earth. I know, boys and girls, that this piece is difficult - really rather too difficult for you. Later, if God spares your lives, you will understand it better. But, because it is so important, I could not pass over it, for it is written for our solemn warning.

Oh, pray the Lord to keep you from that terrible, unforgivable sin.

Do you know what is very dangerous? ... If you ridicule sacred things against your own better judgment, though a voice within may warn you. Have you a God-fearing father or mother; grandfather or grandmother? Do they rebuke you if you are rough or indifferent? ... Do you sometimes hear in their prayers that they bear you with weeping to the throne of grace, pleading with God to call you by His grace? ... Have you ever been deeply impressed by the words of such a prayer? ...

Then do not later among evil companions laugh at or ridicule the tears or the prayers of your father, mother, grandfather or grandmother, because that is very, very dangerous.

Why? ... Well, because you know and feel that you must not make fun of that. You know and are convinced that you are doing something very evil. At first you scarcely dare to do it. You hesitate. If you ignore the warning voice, and still do it, then it could come about that you go too far, it could come about that you sin away for ever the hope of salvation, that the door of grace is closed to you.

Perhaps some boy or girl will ask: "Yes, but what is the sin against the Holy Ghost really?"

The Pharisees and Scribes whom I have told you about in this chapter, blasphemed the work of God deliberately, though they were inwardly convinced that it was the work of God. They called it the work of the DEVIL. Those elders of the Jews committed the most terrible sin against the Holy Ghost.

That is why I say yet again in all seriousness: To ridicule sacred things in spite of knowing better and in spite of the warnings of an inner voice is very, very dangerous. I hope that you have been able to understand what I mean.

Matthew 12 vv.46-50
 Mark 3 vv.31-35.
Luke 8 vv.19-21.

Before the Lord Jesus was born, the angel Gabriel had told Mary, the mother of the Lord that she would have a Son. That Child would be the long-promised Messiah. The heavenly messenger then said: "and He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: ... and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

Mary has remembered those words. Oh, it did not look very much like it though. The Child was scarcely born when they had to flee with Him into Egypt, because Herod wanted to kill Him. After that He lived for years as a simple carpenter in Nazareth. Yet in Mary's heart the hope lived on that all would be brought to pass, for she believed Gabriel's message.

At last the time arrived when He started to preach. Through great signs and wonders He attracted the attention of all. He was talked about through the whole land. Thousands sought Him out daily. We may well believe that Mary was happy. She probably thought: "This is much better."

She looked longingly for the time when the whole nation should acknowledge Him as the promised Messiah.

But now, just lately, she has become disturbed. It is not going so well, things are going wrong. Instead of the Pharisees and the Scribes - the elders of the people-believing in Him, they ^{are} _^ withdraw ^{-ing} _^ themselves more and more from Him! More and more they show their hatred and contempt of Jesus of Nazareth.

No, that cannot be. That must not happen. That is all wrong. Why then is her Child not a little more careful. Why is He sometimes so sharp with them? ... Oh yes, what Jesus says is certainly true, but would it not be wiser to keep quiet and become good friends with the Scribes and Pharisees? Who can tell what went on in Mary's heart? ...

Well now, today, she hears that her Son Jesus is again in Capernaum. She hears that Jesus is again immediately surrounded by a great multitude of people, so that He cannot even eat bread. Yes, but that is not right, that cannot go on any longer.

Look, there she hurries with the brothers of Jesus through the streets of Capernaum towards the house where Jesus is. If Jesus will not look after Himself, better than that, then they will do it. They say to each other: "He is beside Himself." That means: "He does not know what He is doing."

Now they are on the way to get Him out of that house. They will take hold of Him and take Him with them. Soon they stand before the door and want to enter. To enter? ... Impossible! They cannot possibly, for the people stand closely packed. There is no chance of getting through such a solid mass.

Well then, if they cannot come in to Him, ~~then~~ He must come out to them.

"Please" they ask those at the back, "just say that we are here outside and that we want to speak to Him."

The request is passed from one to another. Soon afterwards those who are sitting close to Jesus say: "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee."

Jesus, however, remains calmly seated and answers: "Who is my mother and my brethren?"

Now, what does the Lord Jesus mean by that? ... Does he no longer know His own mother? ... Does He not want to know her perhaps? ...

Oh yes, of course He knows her, but the Lord Jesus knows why they have come. He knows that they think He is out of His senses, that He is beside Himself. Will He go with them? ... Certainly not! Jesus must not go in this way with His mother, for He is not in Mary's service, but in the service of His heavenly Father. It is not for Mary to care for Him, but His

Mary must be brought away from such things. Such thoughts must not come into her mind. Such thoughts and words were sinful.

He says to the assembled Jews: "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it." That means "Whoever believes in Me and needs Me as a Saviour, they are my spiritual family. For such I will pay the debt of sin."

Can you see that ~~that~~ ^{the} Lord Jesus is getting more and more enemies?

The Pharisees are becoming more hateful. But even His own kin do not understand Him. Even His own family thinks that He is beside Himself, for that is what they said.

Oh what an insult, how humiliating for the Son of God. It made His suffering even heavier.

Nobody understood Him, nobody could help Him, nobody could give Him advice. I do not write this that you might pity the Lord Jesus, for He freely took upon Himself the bitter way of suffering. He did that out of love for His people. He bore God's wrath in the stead of His elect. It was for that end that He came here on earth.

But I write this, so that you may have some idea of what sin cost the Lord Jesus.

May you think more about that, then you would not with pleasure so easily commit sin.

Are there some among you too, who have sorrow for sin? ...