

Empire Church of the Brethren  
Sunday Service Sermons

28 April 2024

No empty Souls Here.

Text: "When an evil spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. 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. 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 person is worse than the first." *Matt. 12:43-45.*

I mentioned fighting demons last week when speaking of Luz in Las Vegas.

If you have ever looked into the eyes of a demon possessed person you will never forget it.

Behind their eyes you see flaming tongues of fire.

And the hair on the back of your neck stands up.

For real folks.

Before we get into this subject let me say that this Scripture is a word of caution about demon removing.

It is not something to mess with unless you know what you are doing and are sure God wants you to get involved.

For it takes the power of God to accomplish this and not have what this Scripture is speaking about.

Have you ever swept a house clean of evil spirits?

It is also an awesome event.

These things are available to us as believers but you have to know that God is with you in order to accomplish the task.

It takes real faith and trust to take on Satan on his ground.

A story to set the stage before us.

A new sheriff was elected at a time when the community was being plagued by a lot of burglaries.

He encouraged a "neighborhood watch program" and asked the people of the community to be on the lookout for suspicious-looking strangers.

The sheriff encouraged neighbors to inform those near to them when they would be absent so they could be on the alert for any suspicious activity during their absence.

At the end of one year, there was a significant decrease in the number of burglaries in that part of the county.

An empty house is in greater danger than a house fully occupied.

Unoccupied rental property is always in danger because it presents an invitation to burglaries and vandalism and now squatters.

Jesus used these known facts about empty houses to illustrate a greater truth: the danger of having an empty soul.

Jesus was speaking to his nation and to its religious leaders.

The evil spirit of idolatry had been cast out of the lives of the people of Israel as a result of the pain of the exile.

Never again was the nation of Israel tempted by the worship of idols.

At the same time, the people of Israel neglected to let the true God of love, grace, forgiveness, and helpfulness enter into their hearts and lives.

Consequently, they possessed an empty soul.

The nation and the people were experiencing the results of being empty of God and his goodwill for their lives.

Their religion was empty in that it was full of negatives and lacked involvement in outreach

ministries.

Augustine is quoted as saying, "Thou hast made us for thyself and our souls are restless until they find their rest in thee."

One can participate in religious activities yet have an empty soul in terms of being filled with God and his goodness.

The parable of the empty house should cause us to tremble.

It is possible that some of us have not let God come in to fill our lives in such a manner as to keep evil spirits away.

This can happen without people being aware of it.

A religion of negatives.

The Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day were great at emphasizing the negative.

Their favorite verses began with, "Thou shalt not."

They have many followers today who take great satisfaction in their negative goodness.

Having become very pious and self-righteous, they speak loud and clear about what they have not done.

Jesus would assert that negative goodness is not sufficient.

The shallow ineffectiveness of reformation.

Some people have thought they were very religious because they turned over a new leaf and forsook a bad lifestyle.

The parable of the empty house, which has been called the haunted house, speaks to us concerning the fact that reformation is not deep enough and will prove to be ineffective.

Alcoholics need to do something besides forsaking the use of alcohol as a form of coping with the pressures of life.

Those who consume alcohol are using humankind's most ancient tranquilizer, which dulls the pain that comes as a result of the cruelties of life.

The use of this drug in the form of social beverages is very destructive and will eventually destroy many who use it.

It should be recognized that "alcoholic spirits" are in reality a substitute for that which only the Spirit of God can do in the life of the individual.

Lovers of pleasure need to do something more than forsake a habit that is indulgent toward their appetites and their love of ease.

Greedy people need to do something more than just quit grasping for more of the possessions of the world.

They need to become like God and become generous givers rather than greedy graspers.

The aggressiveness of evil.

Jesus was not focusing on the depravity of the human heart when he gave voice to this parable of the empty house.

He was recognizing the malignant aggressiveness of evil and the tendency of evil to return again and again.

We need, with the help of God, to drive out every demon that would possess us.

We need to recognize that the demons that are driven out may come back in another form unless the place from which they were driven is filled with the presence of God.

Only God, in his fullness, can prevent the return of evil into a person's life.

Let God fill your life with good things.

It is not enough to be merely empty of evil.

We must let God fill our hearts and lives with his goodness.

The mere absence of evil in your life will not bring you fullness of joy or cause you to be well pleasing in the eyes of our father God.

A heart that is empty of evil and cleansed from sin must be filled if it is to remain clean and experience fullness of joy.

The way to keep the weeds down in a garden is to fill that garden with seeds and plants so the weeds and the grass can be easily controlled and crowded out.

We need to do more than let Jesus come into our hearts to drive out the evil spirits that disturb and disappoint and destroy.

We must let God's Spirit fill our lives.

We must fill our lives with the things of God or the evil spirits will return to plague us, and this means that our last state could be worse than the first.

An empty mind and an empty heart invite disappointment and tragedy.

Many professing Christians are characterized by a negative form of religion and have let evil spirits come and fill their minds and their lives.

Consider the evil spirit of self-righteousness that makes us so unattractive in the eyes of the unsaved people around us.

Consider the evil spirit of self-satisfaction that causes us to live dormant and stagnant lives.

Consider the evil spirit of apathy that leads to boredom and dissatisfaction with life.

Consider the evil spirit of criticism of those who are trying to do the will of God.

Evil spirits can take many forms and occupy hearts that should be filled with the Spirit of God and with the goodness of God.

God wants to occupy the house of your soul.

He wants to help you cultivate the fruit of the spirit.

He wants to help you to love him supremely and to love yourself properly and to love others in a helping and joyful way.

When we permit God to fill our hearts and lives, he gives us a great inward security that replaces the fear and anxiety that dwelt there before.

When he is permitted to fill our hearts and lives, he enriches us so that we can become givers instead of getters.

He enables us to experience a joy that overflows and brings joy to others.

God wants to help you be what he meant for you to be before the Evil One came in and disturbed and destroyed the beauty and peace of Eden's garden.

God wants to restore paradise in your heart, and he can do that only through Jesus Christ.

Let Jesus come into your heart. There is no substitute for Jesus!