

Luke 11:29-36
Listening to God and Looking to Jesus

Intro: Crowds hold an amazing influence over people. This came to light in the presidential election of 2012. It was Mitt Romney running against Barak Obama for those who remember. Since the Iowa caucus is a big deal politically, most of the candidates would pass through our town. One week it was announced that presidential hopeful Romney was coming to speak at the local Christian college. I had friends who stood in line for hours to secure a seat.

Someone who worked in politics later told me that the main reason the Romney campaign decided to stop and hold this event is because that same afternoon, Obama was also stopping at one of the larger Iowa universities. So the media would have a 20 second clip of Obama speaking, surrounded by a crowd of young millennial college students. Team Romney needed to match that. All the planning and momentum went to secure a crowd for a 20 second media clip and a few sound bites.

- The first thing Luke spotlights in our text is the crowd (v29)
Jesus's mission though is not to secure a crowd but to bring about a kingdom that saves and transforms lives.
- The kingdom of God has direct bearing on what we do with our *ears* and *eyes*.
God's kingdom has everything to do with what we listen to and what we are looking at.

1. God's kingdom requires an ear in the present (v29)

- As already noted, Jesus is not impressed by the large crowd; he is not driven by the crowd or enslaved to the crowd. Instead, he speaks brutally honest truth to the crowd: "evil generation."
- When Jesus taught, he had to deal with a lot of hard hearts.
- Here he challenges the "prove it" attitude (v16)—those looking for some cosmic sign; it says explicitly they wanted to test Jesus.

Jesus did not come to this earth to be tested, but trusted.

Signs are meaningless if hearts are hard.

It's critical for us to see that Jesus does not come to us on our terms, but his.

Verse (29) presses us to ask the question: what are we seeking?

This crowd already had Jesus, but for some *he was not enough*. They wanted something else to satisfy. His simple presence and person was not enough.

We may not ask for a sign, but is Jesus enough for us? Are we satisfied in him alone?

Is his Word sufficient enough for us? Do we have an ear for him in the present?

2. God's kingdom requires an ear to the past (30-31)

- Even though God speaks to people in the present through his Word, we also have a history of how God has spoken in the past.
- Jesus points us back to the Old Testament (OT) by giving two examples:
 - 1) A pagan woman (Queen of Sheba—modern day Yemen). She approached God's messenger (King Solomon) to *listen* (1 Ki 10:1-13).
 - 2) A prophet (Jonah) approached a pagan people, and they *listened*.
- Both stress outsiders who *listen to God*.

• This is a good place to get our bearings straight in reading/understanding the OT.

Why is this important? Because some church leaders are saying things like,

“when it comes to stumbling blocks to the faith, the OT is right there at the top of the list.”

(Andy Stanley *Irresistible*, p. 290. Accessed from TGC blog post by Michale Kruger, Oct 22, 2018)

Comments like that are irresponsible and cause people to shy away from the OT.

In our day of biblical illiteracy, that is not what people need to hear.

So why do we need the OT?

- 1) The OT teaches us about the nature of God. The first question we should ask: what does this say about God? We don't ask if this will be a stumbling block.
- 2) The OT teaches by moral example. (1 Cor 10:6-10)

⁶ Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷ Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” ⁸ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹ We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

The wilderness narrative instructs: watch your heart. Don't desire evil. Steer clear of sexual sin.

Refrain from grumbling.

- 3) The OT teaches us about the Messiah (Christ-centered reading)

- Did you notice how Paul sees Christ is present in the OT? He is the rock (v4); and the one Israel was testing (v9).

- This is how Jesus taught from the OT in Lk 24:27.

“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Understanding God’s kingdom requires that we have an ear to the past—that we know the OT, and know it well—and see *Jesus as the climatic center*.

3. God’s kingdom requires an ear for the prophet (v32)

As we focus on Jonah, two things emerge:

1. Jonah was freed from the grip of death after 3 days in the belly of a fish.
2. Jonah was a preacher with a message of judgment, repentance, and salvation.

Luke zeros in on Jonah *the preacher*.

When Jonah preached, his message was met with a response: *repentance*.

Repentance is a word that must be in a vocabulary of faith. Repentance is listening to God and looking to Jesus.

- And note what Jesus implies: at the future seat of judgment, these Gentile’s will shame those whose hearts were hard against Jesus.
- So the *sign* that Jesus refers to, I take, is the miraculous power of the Spirit to work inside a person’s heart so they respond positively to God’s Word.
- The *greatest miracle* is when a dead heart—that could care less about God—*comes alive* and turns to him! The Queen of Sheba and Nineveh are the examples.

They exemplify outsiders/outcasts who receive God’s Word with a concrete response.

- This would have been shocking for a Jewish audience to hear, but hopeful for a Gentile person reading. The picture is a believing Gentile shaming a doubting Jew on judgment day. To quote a friend of mine “there are going to be many surprises on judgment day.” This is a serious thing to think about right now. Imagine the future day of judgment. What will that look like for you? A day of surprise? A day of shame? The gospel hope is that it does not need to be a day of surprise or shame; it can be a day of stability because of Christ.

Responding to Jesus—receiving his Word, is the only thing that can stabilize us on that day.

4. God’s kingdom requires a continual eye on Jesus (33-36)

- Light is a symbol of revelation and guidance. A person would light an oil lamp to reveal what is in a dark room and guide their footsteps.

- It makes most sense *not* to see this as speaking about believers, but Christ's teaching.
- In other words, I don't think it is saying the same thing as (Mt 5:16) "let your light shine" it's closer to (Jn 8:12) "I am the light of the world."
- Jesus moves from his light to our eye (v34).
- Two types of eyes are mentioned, healthy and *evil* (Lit. evil, same word in v29).
- The eye is a similar metaphor to the heart, either healthy or bad.
- One thing is remarkably clear: light has to come into us from the outside source.

We don't naturally have light in ourselves. The only hope is that it comes from an outside source, Christ.

- Finally, take note of the warning: Jesus urges *caution*: "Be careful, lest the light in you be darkness"

He seems to be saying that the more we look to him, the more light comes in. When our eyes are turned from Christ, the more darkness we allow in.

- Which means there must be dangerous, light dimming threats.

What are dangerous, light dispersing threats?

—Material wealth: some can't see Christ because of so much stuff. Too many possessions can create a dark, spiritual void. Some shop themselves to death every weekend.

—Others can't see Christ's light because of anxiety, worry, and fear. Excessive fear, real or imagined can dispel the light of Christ.

—Some are not seeing Christ because their eyes are continually set on pornography, where beauty of seeing Christ has been traded for fleeting, passing pleasure that is disturbingly dark and rules their affections.

- I've simply used categories Jesus did in 8:14 "cares, riches, pleasures"

The good news: if you will listen to God and repent, God will shine Christ's light on you.

The darkness always disperses when Christ's glory begins to radiate in our heart.

Close:

(Eph 5:14) —verse of repentance.

¹⁴for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

"Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you."

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,
Careful living and the light go together.

For those of us who have been driving for a long time, there is a tendency to mentally put the car on autopilot. We've driven the route 100's of times; but then there is a close call one day. An unexpected car stops and you suddenly realize: Man, I need to be careful. It doesn't matter how long we drive, there is an element of caution that needs to be there every time we get behind the wheel. The same principle applies spiritually. We never get beyond cautious living. There is no such thing as a spiritual autopilot.

May God help us to listen to his word carefully and look to Jesus continually.