

The Dangers of Sign-Seeking

Sermon 36 in the Luke Series

Luke 11:27-32

Last week, we started a new section in Luke. It starts in Luke 11:14 and goes all the way to chapter 13:9.

-- The section opens with Christ ministering among the people.

--After some controversy, Christ willingly goes aside privately to the house of a Pharisee, where he met with the Scribes and Pharisees – the religious leaders among the Jews. They were hoping, it appears to make some kind of “deal” with him, because of His immense popularity.

If that was their desire – it certainly did not work out that way.

Christ was not one to compromise His message – because He had come from God to do His Father’s will.

After the meeting, the Scribes and Pharisees are more determined than ever to try to trap Him in His words and prove Him to be a deceiver.

-- Then, Christ begins to preach again – this time with larger crowds than ever –
12:1

But, instead of addressing the crowds directly, He begins to teach HIS OWN DISCIPLES, publicly, in the hearing of the crowd.

He makes a clear distinction between those who are His and accept Him as Messiah and those Israelites who don’t.

Finally, in verse 54, Christ turns His attention to the crowd, who had been listening all this time, and applies these things to them by way of warning.

We pick up with Christ still ministering among the people:

I. True Blessedness -- Luke 11:27-28

A. The Outburst

It appears this woman was so overcome by the things she saw and heard that she simply cries out this blessing. It is the highest form of praise she can think of – being a woman and a probably a mother herself.

Luke often adds tidbits of information that Matthew and Mark don't record.

These two verses are another example of that.

Luke carefully interviewed a number of persons as he wrote his gospel.

It is reasonable to assume that Mary, the mother of Jesus would be among those interviewed by Luke.

Luke has the most detail concerning the birth of our Lord.

Luke speaks the most about the childhood of our Lord.

I wonder if this is one of those incidents, known by Mary and told to Luke.

B. The response of Christ.

“More than that” is one little word in the Greek – the word $\mu\epsilon\nu\text{---}\omicron\upsilon\nu$.

There really isn't any one word in English that can translate this word.

Other translations use the English word RATHER.

NASB says, ON THE CONTRARY.

I point this out, because if there is ever a time that the Bible is going to set up Mary as THE QUEEN of HEAVEN and teach us to worship her, this is it.

Christ has a rebuke her this woman – but it is a soft rebuke.

He doesn't tell her she's wrong – because she's NOT wrong.

When Mary was carrying Jesus – Elizabeth, her cousin, broke out in a blessing regarding her.

Mary, in her hymn of praise said that all people would call her blessed.

Christ answered perfectly, not putting his mother down in any way – nor lifting her up to a place of honor just below Himself.

The scholar Thrall puts it this way, *“What you have said, is true as far as it goes, but the blessedness of Mary consists in the fact that she shares in the blessedness of those who hear the Word of God and keep it.”*

That's just a paraphrase, but I believe it conveys what Jesus says very well.

Mary too needed a Savior.

Mary too needed to be obedient to the Word.

Mary too needed to humble herself before HER OWN SON – who wasn't just her Son – but was the Mighty God Himself.

Mary was a God-fearing woman before the conception of Jesus.

Mary was a God-fearing woman all through her pregnancy.

Mary was a God-fearing woman all through the childhood of Christ.

Mary was a God-fearing woman throughout Christ's ministry.

Mary was a God-fearing woman after His death and resurrection.

She was a woman who feared the Lord – and the Lord used her.

Her blessedness was because she BELIEVED GOD and kept His Word.

That's the greatest blessedness – and the blessedness we can share with her.

II. A Wicked Generation – Seeking a Sign 11:29-32 (Read it)

We have to go back into the context to our message last week.

A. The Context -- Luke 11:14-16

We see Christ, casting out a demon – this was done in the open – in front of the swarming crowds that were gathering to hear Christ:

And we saw three responses.

1. **v. 14 – some marveled.** They were overwhelmed. They were amazed. They couldn't believe what they had just seen.

2. **v. 15 – some blasphemed.** They accused him of casting out demons by the power of Satan. We spent most of our time dealing with this last week – A HOUSE DIVIDED CANNOT STAND even talking about the unpardonable sin that comes up in 12:10.

3. **v. 16 – Others TESTED HIM** – desiring a sign FROM HEAVEN.

What did they want to see?

Did they want to see fire come from the sky?

Did they want to see Jesus move the stars around?

Did they want Him to spell out his name in lights?

There response to this great miracle?

Yeah, casting out a demon is impressive – now show us a sign FROM HEAVEN.

Seeing is believing? No, it's not.
Unbelief is MUCH STRONGER than sight or sound or any
other thing.

Unbelief is SO STRONG it can only be conquered by the power of God
Himself as He opens the sinners heart to believe.

Back to 11:29

B. The Sign That Generation Will Receive v. 29-30

The crowds were gathering even more.
What will He do next?
What great miracle are we going to see?

NO SIGN – except for one.
The Sign of the prophet Jonah.

This was an insult to the Jewish crowd.
The Ninevites were GENTILES.
The Ninevites were HEATHENS.

You might remember, that JONAH HIMSELF wanted NOTHING TO
DO with the Ninevites.

He preached AGAINST HIS WILL to them.

What is the sign He is talking about?

A sign most of those in the crowd would live to see.
HIS DEATH – and HIS RESURRECTION FROM DEATH.

To another crowd – on another day – Jesus explained the sign of
Jonah more fully.

Matthew 12:40 – *“For as Jonah was three days and three
nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the son of man be
three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”*

And many in that crowd would help to bring this sign to pass.
No doubt, there were many who heard these words that would stand,
about a year later, and cry out CRUCIFY HIM – CRUCIFY HIM!

They would help to bring about His death.

He would overcome death by rising again.
That wicked generation themselves would be instruments, used by God to bring in the sign of the Prophet Jonah – condemning themselves.

- Some were saved in Ninevah.
- The Queen of Sheba herself appears to have become a God-fearer.
- Many in this crowd would come to believe the Savior – maybe some of them on the Day of Pentecost or shortly thereafter, when they see all that has come to pass.

C. The Judgment That Generation Will Receive v. 31-32

You look down on the men of Ninevah – but they repented at the preaching of Jonah – and a greater than Jonah is here.

The Queen of Sheba was a Gentile ruler – from what we know today as the country of Yemen.

She was so impressed by Solomon that she traveled to see his kingdom and hear his wisdom. A GREATER than Solomon is among them.

III. Notes and Observations on Christ’s Warning to that Generation

- 1. An Evil Generation seeks after a sign** – but sign seekers are never satisfied. They always need MORE PROOF. Christ had cast out a demon, right before their eyes and their response – SHOW US A SIGN FROM HEAVEN.

- 2. They demand a sign – but when one is given, it will be of Christ’s own choosing.**
Show us a sign.
He will – but it won’t be the sign they are asking for.

- 3. Jesus Himself will become their sign.**
He gives it in the future tense –
They can’t see it yet.
The sign is coming – will they believe then?

4. Jonah was the sign to the Ninevites.

He had been given up for dead.

Remember, he ran from God.

A foolish endeavor.

Where can you go to hide from God?

BUT HE RAN – went the opposite way from Ninevah -- and got on a boat headed for Tarshish – one of the farthest known outposts in that world.

God sent a HUGE STORM.

The sailors did everything they could to save themselves.

Jonah knew why the storm came – and told them who he was and why they were all in danger – and Jonah told them to throw him overboard and the storm would stop.

Jonah knew it was the hand of God – coming for him.

After exhausting all their options – they did the only thing they knew to do – they threw him into the sea. And the sea became calm – and it was obvious that God was after Jonah.

And it was obvious that Jonah was a dead man.

Whether or not they saw the fish swallow Jonah, you can rest assured, they would have taken no comfort for his safety if they saw him devoured by that giant fish.

For three days – Jonah was in the bowels of sheol.

In the belly of the fish – Jonah repented of his sin.

Finally, his luxury cruise came to an end - -and the giant fish spit Jonah out on dry land – right near Nineveh.

So, Jonah preached.

But his message was not one of HOPE or GRACE.

“Yet 40 days and Ninevah will be overthrown.”

Somehow, and we aren't told the details, but the Ninevites seemed to know what had happened to Jonah.

And the Ninevites believed the message of Jonah.

And the Ninevites REPENTED IN THE HOPE that God would spare them.

Interestingly enough – many modern skeptics do not believe in the literal account of Jonah. CHRIST DID. Christ accepted Jonah as true history.

The account of Ninevah always raises the question – Did Ninevah TRULY repent of their sins unto salvation OR was it merely a national repentance that temporarily stayed the hand of God?

150 years later – Nahum the prophet came to Ninevah, warning them of their imminent

5. They will be held accountable for more than the Ninevites or the Gentile heathens if they refuse to repent and believe under the ministry of the One Greater than Jonah or Solomon.

This same point will be made again in chapter 12 – *to whom much is given, much is required.*

We should understand the words of Christ regarding Ninevah and The Queen of Sheba in a figurative and not literal sense.

Christ's point isn't that judgment is given to the men of Ninevah or the Queen of Sheba.

The point is, they repented and they believed under LESSER LIGHT than this crowd had.

The crowd had the advantages of the Scriptures.
The crowd had the advantages of being part of the covenant people of God.
The crowd had the advantages of SEEING and HEARING Christ Himself, which is the whole message of Scripture.

They were THE MOST FAVORED GENERATION that became the most wicked generation – the one that crucified the Lord.

6. To miss Christ is to miss the entire message of Scripture.

We can take the ministry of Solomon and the ministry of Jonah as figurative for all that is contained in THE WISDOM BOOKS and all that is contained IN THE PROPHETS concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

7. The Queen of Sheba and Solomon I Kings 10:1-11

It's worth taking a quick look at this incident in closing.

Solomon and his kingdom were at the height of their greatness.

This was before he foolishly turned to idolatry.

Solomon was the beloved son of David.

God had blessed him with wisdom beyond all others.

His fame had reached all the way to what is present day Yemen and beyond.

The Queen decided to take a journey to see if the extravagant claims she had heard of Solomon were true.

We are to come to Jesus Christ, just as this woman came to Solomon.

1. She came with hard questions, but he answered them all v. 2b-3

These hard questions were riddles or enigmas in the tradition of the Arabians.

The wisdom God had given to Solomon was more than sufficient to answer all of her questions.

Jesus is the answer to EVERY question in our life.

There is no other place we could turn.

He is a solid rock and a sure foundation.

Trust Him, believe Him, ask Him and then heed His answers, which He has written for us in His eternal Word.

The greatest problem of Jesus' Generation?

They wouldn't HEED Jesus – even though He is greater than Solomon.

Don't make the same mistake.

2. Like Solomon – Jesus is greater than we can even imagine – v. 6

The half has not been told.

No doubt, the Queen of Sheba expected Solomon to be a great king, but she also expected that there had been some exaggeration in what she had heard.

Few things in life live up to our expectations.

Rest assured, Jesus Christ the Lord will live up to your expectations, and exceed them 1000 fold.

No true Christian has ever regretted coming to Jesus.

No true Christian has even been disappointed in what He has found Christ to be.

He is more than any of us can imagine.

Our spiritual senses are so dull now.

We see through a glass darkly.

Heaven seems so far away.

We have never seen our blessed Savior's face.

Rest assured, in this life – and especially in the life to come – there is no way to even begin to tell the wonder and majesty that belong to Jesus Christ.

3. The blessing she gave to Solomon v. 9

It was true for him, but how much more true is it for Christ?

God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name.

God delights to have Jesus reign.

God loves us through Jesus Christ and loves us because of Jesus Christ.

Forgiveness of sins can be found ONLY THROUGH Jesus Christ – and no matter how great Solomon was – there was no way for Him to pay for anyone's sins.

Solomon was able to build the Temple.

Jesus Christ Himself IS the Temple.

Do you know Him?

Are you trusting in Him?

Do you believe Him – or do you find yourself among those of that Generation that refused to believe Him?

Pray

Hymn – 584 (tune of 399 – note 4 verses)

Benediction: Luke 11:28b