

JESUS IS OUR SIGN

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Luke 11:29-44

Seeking a Sign

And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, "This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.
The Lamp of the Body

"No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light."

Woe to the Pharisees and Lawyers

And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. Then the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you.

"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them."

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It could be said that to make friends and influence people, if you have a crowd gathering to hear you speak, you wouldn't probably start your message to them with, "This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet." Yet, Jesus was God incarnate. He was God who came down "in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh." (Romans 8:3) And so, Jesus, being God in the flesh, could not lie. He had to tell the people, as it was. Was He acting as a mean, angry God in saying what He said about their generation? Later, in Luke 19, Jesus looked out over Jerusalem and wept for the people. "He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! (Luke 19:41-42)

Jesus, the Prince of Peace was among them and many still didn't get it. Many, or I should say, most people of this generation don't get it either. Jesus is among us. He dwells within each of His children. Mahandas Ghandi gave his now famous quote saying that he would probably be a Christian if it weren't for Christians. Yet he missed it too. Jesus is among us, we have to just call on His name to be saved. The Jewish leaders of Jesus' time had become experts at living according to the law. They also had devised many schemes as to how to skirt around the edges of the law, without being blamed for breaking the law. Jesus could see right through their hypocrisy. The Apostle Paul spoke of the difference between the law and the grace of God, the Old Covenant vs. the New Covenant.

"For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:5-13)

Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. That is a true statement as the Word of God reveals to us, not lies, but the truth. And that truth, being Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, will set you free. Yet Paul is not just speaking of sealing one's fate in salvation by believing that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead on the third day, conquering death so that we too, who believe

will also overcome death and inherit eternal life. That is all true. But Paul was speaking of an active faith in Christ Jesus. "one believes unto righteousness" and "confession is made unto salvation". That speaks of the sealing of the promise for eternal life in Christ Jesus but it also speaks of us remaining in that faith in Christ Jesus. Paul also says, "'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" I am certainly not anyone's judge nor should anyone else get caught up in that. There are many times that I will go to God in prayer and say, "what is up with that person?" Ultimately I'm not looking for confirmation as to their condemnation. I'm looking for what I should be praying for them and what I should be praying for myself. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (**Romans 3:23**) Right? We're all righteous and perfect in Christ, we're all saved and sanctified in Christ, right? The answer is yes, all who are in Christ are righteous, perfect, saved, and sanctified. But, He is also making us righteous, sanctifying us, and saving us. He is making us into the very image of Christ, and as the Apostle John said, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (**1 John 3:2**) Yet it doesn't work out so well, if we aren't spending time with Him and spending time in His Word. There's a multitude of distractions out there in the world that will get you looking every which way, except looking unto Jesus.

Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be made free'?" Jesus answered them, "**Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.**" (**John 8:31-36**)

What Paul was saying in Romans 10:9-10 and what Jesus was saying there in John 8 are essentially the same thing. Paul did say, that as many as call on the name of the Lord will be saved. He also stated that, "if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Yet he continues saying, "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever **believes on Him** will not be put to shame." What is that saying? It is saying, that our lives become a living testimony of Christ living in us! Right? No one believes on Jesus, I mean truly believes on His Word, and then just decides from day to day whom he/she will serve afterwards.

Now let's go back to what Jesus said, "If you **abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**" Abide in My Word, He says. When Jesus prayed to His Heavenly Father, just prior to His crucifixion and death, He prayed, "**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**" (**John 17:17**) Knowing the Word, knowing Jesus, that is what God is telling us...in His Word. Which is it then, knowing Jesus or the Bible (aka the Word)? Both! Jesus is the Word, which means that the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, then ministers to us as we read His Word. That is a huge part of our time in fellowship with God, our Heavenly Father, and Lord, and Savior.

Our time with God in His Word and in prayer is what blesses Him and it blesses us. We aren't doing that to be saved, we do it because we are saved in Christ Jesus and it is what the Holy Spirit is leading us to do. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (**Ephesians 2:8-10**)

For our passage in Scripture today in Luke 11, Jesus said, "**No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light.**"

What is that saying? If you have believed on Christ Jesus and received Him into your heart as John said in **John 1:11-13**, "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." To those who have been then, "born-again" you have the Holy Spirit of God working in you to will and to do for His good pleasure." (**Philippians 2:13**) Hiding that light would be going back into that darkness from which you came. I'm talking about living in that darkness, basically snuffing out the candle by your lifestyle. We may go back to that darkness TO BE THAT light in the darkness though, right? Yet, in this world, no matter where you are, there is darkness that could stand a little more light! Even here! Susie and I are incredibly blessed when anyone shares their testimony of what Christ is doing in their lives. We rejoice in our prayers over what God is doing, not only through us, but what God is doing through each of you.

Once again, Jesus prayed what we know of as **John 17:21**, "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." We can all be encouraged and blessed as we come to the unity of the faith in Christ Jesus. That doesn't mean we are compromising the gospel of Jesus Christ so that we can all just "get along". When we all are in agreement, to be living our lives as unto the Lord, God is blessed and glorified, and so are His people. We are all to come to the realization of God's perfect will for each of us, as Paul spoke of in **Romans 12:1-2**, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

We're not being called into a nice little life, where we are just practicing a religion collectively, so that we can have peace and fellowship, coffee and hot dogs. We are called into God's glorious and eternal kingdom to where we are His light of truth in this dark and dying world. Jesus gave the stark contrast between the true and perfect will of God vs. empty religion and rituals. The Pharisees would make a show of their good deeds and make sure that everyone saw them as pious and sanctified. Yet Jesus spoke of operating in "justice and the love of God". It's kind of impossible to be hating on one of God's children or living in unforgiveness and to say that you love God with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind. Jesus said that is the greatest commandment and the second commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. (**Mark 12:30-31**) That is still God's will for us. We aren't living according to the law but the Spirit which means, as we have His Spirit dwelling in us, we are to love God and others. Not always easy, is it? That is why we have to take it to God in prayer. Sometimes God will tell you to stay away from that person, but keep praying for them. Sometimes, as I do, I just say, "Lord Jesus, that person has really caused me harm, or grief, or sadness, or confusion" or whatever.

I've wrestled with the understanding of what is God's justice as it relates to how we should live. After all, none of us are lawyers or judges, right? Yet, consider this, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (**Romans 5:8**) That, is the love of God! In **Romans 2:4** Paul speaks of the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, that leads us to repentance! If we are condemning others, treating them as how we think they deserve, then God won't be able to use us in His leading them to repentance. We want to be God's instrument of mercy and love and kindness that leads others to the justice of God that was nailed on a cross. None of us deserve the goodness, kindness, and grace of God.

When we believe on Christ we confess Jesus as the Lord of our lives, which by the way is essential for all believers, He can't be your Savior and not your Lord. For He IS the King of kings and Lord of Lords. We have to let Him be the Judge. I'm convinced that many folks who appear to have it all together, going to church every Sunday, being kind to children and animals, will not all be found in heaven. Jesus said as much. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." (Matthew 7:21) That's a tough one to dance around for those who think they just believe in Jesus and then live their lives according to their own will and desire. Christ Jesus "died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." (2 Corinthians 5:15) We are to "reckon [y]ourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:11)

The Pharisees and the scribes are quite similar today to those teachers that tickle the ears, make the people feel good about themselves, and are teaching of how to manipulate God into having a nice life full of all the treasures of the world. There's nothing wrong though, to be rejoicing in one's salvation and the promise of eternal life in Christ and in how God is working in us His Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption. (1 Corinthians 1:30-31) But the glory goes to God, we are lifting up Christ, not looking for ourselves to be lifted up. He will lift us up in His purpose. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." That is a promise from God. The Pharisees and the scribes were looking for their own glory and satisfactions, not God's.

Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, "For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them." When Jesus said the Holy Spirit will lead you into all truth, He was saying that He will lead us away from the false teachings and ways of those who are of the world. As I know and confess, every person I've ever known, including myself, has not been right all of the time in what we proclaim as truth. We all still live in these carcasses called the flesh. That is not an excuse to be lazy or haphazard in what we do or say. But it does say that we all have to search the Scriptures as the Bereans did in Acts 17:11. If we lived our lives according to what everyone has ever told us we would be way out in the weeds somewhere full of stickers or thistles.

This message and all of our messages should be to pointing others to Jesus and the Word of God. There's not necessarily anything condemning about reading stuff other than the Bible and there may not be anything wrong with what we look at on the internet or on tv. Susie and I have gotten into a ritual, so to speak, after dinner we separate and we both spend time reading our Bibles and then at 8pm we turn on the tv to watch the Beverly Hillbillies. I'm not promoting

that show, just saying that is what we do for a short excursion from reality to just have a good laugh.

Likewise, there are times you may read stuff outside of the Word of God. Yet, when it comes to all things spiritual, if it isn't in the Word of God, it isn't worth considering. How can we be made complete in Christ Jesus? The answer is in the question. The Word of God. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17) There are more books than sands on the seashores I'm thinking and there is a lot of stuff that is being passed off as being wisdom. Doctors and teachers and philosophers have all kinds of learning and stuff they would like for us to believe. I choose to cling to Jesus, for He is my life. I choose to rely upon the Word of God to guide me into all truth, to be equipped and complete according to God's plan and purpose for my life. How about you?

It all starts by believing that God sent His Son Jesus, to die on a cross for our sins. He took our sins against God upon Himself, so that it would not be held against us. Jesus then conquered death, raising from the dead on the third day, so that we too will overcome death, be reconciled to God, so that we can have a personal relationship with our Lord, our God, and our Savior. Whether you have accepted Christ Jesus before or not may today be your day of salvation, forgiveness, and reconciliation to God. God is wanting us to recognize that we are His creation, we were created for His purpose and pleasure, and that He has a beautiful and perfect plan for our lives to be blessed and to be a blessing to others for the glory of God.

Jesus is the sign that we should be looking for. We keep praying for salvations, deliverances and healings but we all need Jesus. We're looking for Jesus in others, the work of the Holy Spirit working in each of God's children. That encourages us and edifies us in seeing God working among us, in the hearts and minds of His people. We are called to keep, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

Jude, in **Jude 1:21** said to "keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." We're looking and praying for God's mercy, not just for ourselves but for others too. Have mercy on us Heavenly Father. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)
Let us pray.