



Luke 11:29–32

29 As the crowds increased, Jesus said, ‘This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. 30 For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. 31 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom; and

now something greater than Solomon is here. 32 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and now something greater than Jonah is here.

Reflection

Chapter 11 of Luke's Gospel is a dark chapter indeed. It began with Jesus' teaching on prayer, which, in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus sharply contrasts with the hypocritical and self-absorbed practices of the Jewish religious leaders of his day. Later on in Luke, Jesus will parody the religious leaders who thought so highly of themselves and lusted after the praise of men even in their prayer life, with a parable of one of

them, praying in a loud voice in the synagogue,

“God, I thank you that I am not like other people – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.” Luke 18:10

With this type of hypocrisy in the background Luke 11 descends further and further into darkness, with Jesus not taking a backward step. Next, Jesus who came to earth to defeat Satan, sin and death is accused by the religious leaders of practising black magic. Some of the most learned figures in ancient Judaism are so blinded by their pride, jealousy and hypocrisy that they make the farcical claim that Jesus, in casting out demons, is somehow

in league with Satan. Amongst the wider crowds no-one comes to Jesus' defence, with many others demanding further signs, as if the extraordinary miracles that Jesus has already performed somehow are not enough. Seeing into their hearts, no amount of miracles would ever be enough for them. Even more in the crowd remained silent, happy simply to sit on the fence and see how things played out. Only a solitary woman in yesterday's passage, true to Luke's habit of raising up women of faith, calls out and pronounces Jesus' mother blessed.

In today's passage, paradoxically, the crowds only continue to grow as Jesus' condemnation of them deepens. Shortly Jesus' attention will turn solely to the Jewish religious leaders whom he will de-

nunciate in the strongest of terms. They have profaned the Holy Spirit by claiming that Jesus' ministry is empowered by the devil. For them Jesus reserves some of the strongest words of condemnation in the pages of the New Testament. But in today's passage, Jesus again addresses the wider crowds. Reading from Luke 11:29–32,

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In their evil, the Pharisees and teachers of the law have tried to twist Jesus' miracles as works of Satan. Sign after sign, miracle after miracle, has fallen on hardened hearts. So today, Jesus says the only miracle left that he will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah, a sign of God's coming judgment. Jonah was sent by God to the people of Ninevah as a sign of God's coming judgement. When he appeared among

them, he himself was a sign to them that his message was from the God because God had rescued him from death. Jonah had spent three days in the belly of a huge fish, as good as dead, until God brought him back to from the dead to them.

The sign of Jonah, the sign of God's judgment on them that Jesus is referring to in today's passage, is his death and resurrection. It will seal their fate. The Jewish religious establishment, and crowds like the one before him now, will kill him, and he will rise again. Jesus will spend three days in the belly of the earth just as Jonah spent three days in belly of the whale. God will bring him back from the dead just as God brought Jonah back from the dead to warn people of God's judgment to come; God's deliverance of him, testament to

God's power to save them also if they've receive Jesus' message with repentance and faith. Only, even in the face of Jesus' most incredible miracle, his resurrection from the dead, they will not repent and their fate will be sealed.

Even the Gentiles will put them to shame. The Ninevites at the sign of Jonah, repented man, woman and child. Someone far greater than Jonah is here but this wicked generation, which includes not just the Pharisees and teachers of the law but also Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and the so many who ultimately turn against Jesus; this wicked generation will not repent. The death and resurrection of Jesus is a far greater witness than the sign of Jonah but this wicked generation will not repent. Similarly, the Queen of the South,

a great pagan Queen in the time of King Solomon came to faith through his wisdom. She too, along with the Ninevites will rise up to condemn this wicked generation on Judgement Day for not turning and repenting to the one far greater than Jonah and far greater than Solomon who walked amongst them.

Think

One far greater than Jonah is here. One far greater than Solomon is here. In 2013 Time Magazine voted Jesus Christ the most influential person in all of human history. Yet this wicked generation will not repent. More than twenty specific prophecies were fulfilled in the last twenty-four hours of Jesus' life on earth alone. Yet this wicked generation will not repent. A homeless

unemployed carpenter, with no formal education, speaks with wisdom the likes of which the world has never seen, no human author's ever since written anything like it, he turns water to wine, heals the sick, calms storms with a word, raises people from the dead, all in his early 30's, only three years in the public eye, then beaten beyond recognition, killed as a criminal, nailed to a cross. Less than 300 years later the entire world's declared Christian. Yet this wicked generation will not repent. And here we are talking about him 2000 years later, in another language, on the other side of the world, billions of people having lived and died convinced that he is God. Jesus has profoundly changed the shape of our world. Our legal system, the printing press, world literacy, education, the equality of men and women, the

rights of children, the abolition of slavery, world charities, the red 'cross,' aid agencies, some of our most beautiful art, literature and architecture, our annual holidays – even today's date the 19th of July 2018 AD – anno Domini, in the year of our Lord. Just look at all the signs. This man has profoundly changed the shape of our entire world. We have far more signs today than they had back then, which means that even more than theirs, our generation too stands condemned. Yet our wicked generation still will not repent.

Pray

Please pray now for our generation. Pray that God would rain down grace and mercy on all people everywhere and that his Spirit would draw huge numbers to Jesus

in repentance and faith. Pray that God would bless your life and ministry and mine as well as we do everything we can with his blessing and power to seek and save the lost. Be the sign to our generation that points them to the risen Lord Jesus.