

## Seeing the Warning Signs Clearly

Luke 11:29-36

**Introduction:** There are warning signs all around us. Warning signs are placed there to vividly make us aware of danger, to show us a clear path, and to help us make good decisions. However, the question is, will we heed the warnings:



Warning - Life Is Not Fair - by SuperheroMonkey

Zazzle



We now enter the further discussion Jesus had with the religious leaders and crowds of people gathering around Jesus. Remember that the starting point of Jesus speaking was the fact that He cast out a demon from a man who was mute, to which the crowd, and mainly leaders, responded by saying He was demonically empowered, while others **sought a sign from heaven** in order to test Him. Jesus graciously, rationally, and relationally dismantled the first argument and exposed definitively the **myth of neutrality**, that if they were not for Jesus, they were actually against Him. He then told a story of another demonically exorcised man who did not replace His life with the Holy Spirit (or with following Jesus), and therefore found Himself in an even worse situation than before (with *7 demons* residing in him!). Jesus made it clear to the crowd that **self reformation without regeneration** (through the Holy Spirit) **is actually fatal**. We must be born again in regeneration, not simply trusting our own moralistic abilities to change.

Now Jesus moves from explanation and clarification to offering **clear warnings in no uncertain terms**. This will be followed by a series of "woe's" (Luke 11:37-52) designed to call out the false teaching, the false gospel, of the religious leaders who were leading people astray. The warnings here were designed to have the crowd **self-examine**, to **learn from the warning signs in scripture**, and to **repent**. That is exactly what we want to do this morning. We should each ask the question: am I seeing the truth clearly? Am I seeing my life clearly in light of who God is? Is the truth changing me in every part, or are there hidden cavities and canyons that are still dark? The end result is that we will have a life **"full of light, having no part dark."**

### Seeing the Signs Already Flashing (11:29-32)

"When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, 'This generation is an **evil generation. It seeks for a sign**, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah **became a sign** to the people of Nineveh, **so will the Son of Man be to this generation**. The **Queen of the South** will rise up at 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 behold, **something greater than Solomon is here**. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, **for they repented** at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."

Before we understand the point Jesus is making, we must understand **two characters from the Old Testament reference**. Most of us have heard of one, while the other may be a bit more mysterious to us. One was a prophet from Israel, while the other was a pagan Queen from a far off land. The prophet spoke to a pagan people in a far off land, while the other travelled hundreds of miles to seek wisdom. The prophet saw a pagan group of people repent, while the pagan Queen saw more than she was even looking for.

- **Jonah**

Jonah, as today, would have been well known by Jesus' listeners. It's a classic story that compels in any era to any generation. Jonah was called by God to preach to the hated people of Nineveh, a message of impending divine judgment and the need to repent. Instead of obedience, Jonah found a boat heading to Tarshish, which was a port on the other end of the known world. Jonah was heaved overboard by reluctant but frightened sailors, and spent 3 days in the belly of a great fish (whale? Whale shark? Megalodon?) It was here that he cried out to God "From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry (Jonah 2:2), and God caused the beast of the sea to spew him out onto land. Amazingly, he travelled to the vast city of Nineveh and they actually heeded the message and repented!

- **Queen of Sheba**

A lesser known figure is perhaps just as intriguing. The Queen of the North is also known as the Queen of Sheba, which is in modern day Yemen, which would have required months of journey by caravan to visit Jerusalem. The account of her arrival and experience with Solomon (who was at the peak of his greatness) is found in **1 Kings 10:1-13 and 2 Chronicles 9:1-12**. Solomon's fame was heard throughout the known world, and she determined to journey to see it for her own eyes (perhaps skeptical about the reports). When she arrived, her breath was literally taken away (1 Kings 10:5; 2 Chron. 9:4). Her high expectations were exceeded, and she expressed what she saw with words of **praise to God!** "*Praise be to the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the Lord's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king, to maintain justice and righteousness.*" (1 Kings 10:8-9). She went from disbelief to firm belief in the person, work, and wisdom of God.

- **Jesus**

Now that we know *who* these people are, we can better understand the point that Jesus was making. He referred to the group as an **evil generation that sought after signs**. This was a warning, a condemning, of the way they were testing Him. They were not truly seeking Him, they were testing. They did not want to follow Him, but question Him. They did not want to repent, but continue on their path. Jesus gave them **3 warning signs**, ones they already knew, to help them wake up from their self-driven blindness.

1). **Jonah was a sign, but Jesus is a greater one** - Not only was Jonah's message what helped the people of Nineveh repent, it was Jonah himself that caused the people to listen. When Jonah wandered up on

shore and told his story, it verified and convinced the people that he was speaking from God (plus the fact that he may have been bleached white by the digestive juices of the great fish - yikes). Jonah was a sign to Nineveh that they needed to repent "**Let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish**" (Jonah 3:8-9).

This was enough for the people of Israel to realize their need. But God gave an even greater sign. It was **Jesus Himself**. Jonah and Jesus preached repentance. They both were swallowed up, one by a sea creature, one by the grave. They both were miraculously delivered from death. Both their deliverances signaled the power of God to save: Nineveh from God's judgment, and the people of Israel into God's kingdom. The greatest sign of Jesus was not only His life, but it would be **His resurrection after death**. This sign should have been convincing, but it was rejected, just as it is today

2) **Queen of Sheba was a sign of great judgment** - She will judge the people Jesus spoke to because she travelled from the ends of the earth to hear Solomon's wisdom (seeking it like gold), and when she found it, she believed it, responded to it, and was changed. By comparison, what was standing in front of them was the greatest wisdom in all of eternity. **1 Corinthians 1:30 - He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and justification.** Paul said later on in Colossians 2:2-3 that in Christ is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. **Jesus is wisdom!** He is the one who unlocks all doors, reveals the mysteries we seek, and gives us Himself to know. The Queen had far less opportunity than the Judeans (and us), yet they looked wisdom in the face and boldly, high-handedly, and audaciously rejected it. This would not escape consequence, however.

3) **The men of Nineveh are a sign of repentance** - Again, the men of Nineveh, full of anger, murder, violence, and a self made kingdom repented at the Word of the Lord. They turned from their wickedness to the Lord, and found (at least temporary) saving from destruction. They were a flashing warning sign to the people of Judea (and us). The people were given the message of the gospel, which was far greater than was offered to Nineveh. The offer of the gospel is for new life, transformation, a reconciled relationship with the God of the universe, entry into His Kingdom, a place in His family, security of the future, indwelling of the Spirit, and life everlasting, which begins by **knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent** (John 17:3). The message is this: **repent!**. Turn from sin and from our seeking self glory, for pursuing selfish gain and hopeless happiness and turn to the Lord!

This was the flashing light. These were the warning signs **already** given by God to the people of Israel. These were enough for the people to see their own sin, their own need, and to turn to salvation. The light was there, but was the darkness. The light reveals, but darkness conceals. We must understand the blindness that hinders us from seeing the light to have the light truly save and change us.

### Seeing the Light Clearly (11:33-36)

"No one after **lighting** a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the **light**. your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but **when it is bad**, your body is full of darkness. Therefore, **be careful** lest the light in you be darkness. If then your whole body is **full of light**, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

- **Purpose of light**

In order to show why this judgment was coming, Jesus taught through the metaphor of light and darkness, sight and blindness, which defined how one understands divine truth. Jesus had said He was

the light of the world (John 8:12; John 9:5), but spiritual darkness produces spiritual blindness (1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 4:4).

The clear and universally accepted purpose of light is to drown out the darkness, illuminating that which was hidden. He pointed to a lamp, which every Jewish family would have in their house, which was made of clay, filled with olive oil, in various sizes, that was lit to light a house in the darkness. When a lamp would be lit in a house, it would be ridiculous to put it in the basement or to cover it up under a basket, but it would be put at an elevated spot to disperse as much light to the corners of the house as possible.

What was Jesus point? Simple. Far from hiding the truth of who He was, Jesus did not withhold any evidence of His identity, but made the light known to all who were there. He gave far more light about who He was than the Queen of Sheba had. He made Himself known by declaring it, healing, raising people from the dead, casting out demons, and fulfilling the prophetic word spoken about Him. Jesus is far from hidden. He does not hide in the shadows or the tall grass. Like a lamp in the darkness, He declares that He is Lord and Savior to all who would believe. **The issue was not a lack of light, it was clearly a lack of sight.**

- **Process of light**

This is the real issue, both with the crowd and with us today. The problem does not lie with the information given or with the amount of information given, but the problem is with the receptor of how the information is received. In other words, Jesus equated the eye of a person with the lamp of their body, how they see and process the truth. If one's eye is **healthy**, truth becomes clear. When the eye is bad, sick, or diseased (sinful), the body is full of darkness. How we see, hear, and respond to truth determines our whole life. What was Jesus pointing out about the crowd, this wicked generation. Why were they stuck in darkness who considered themselves guides to the blind (Rom. 2:17-19) but were in actuality the blind leading the blind (Matt. 15:14)? How did they miss the truth? How did they miss the message that "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all? (1 John 1:5)

**They missed Jesus - John 5:39-40** - *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness of me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may live."* It is clear that the crowd knew Scripture, even practiced it, but they missed the Person and the Work of Jesus Himself. There is no salvation apart from Jesus, for He is the means and the goal of our salvation. We are the gift given to Him by the Father, and we are the ones that He keeps in His Messiah-strength hands (John 10:30-31). It is so common to do this today: we point to so many things as reasons for salvation, but if we do not immediately point to Jesus, we miss the whole picture.

**They failed to repent** - This is clear from the text. They failed to learn from Nineveh and believed they were good to go with no need of transformation. Far too often we have heard the same story: external goodness, the talk of belief, maybe even the mention of Jesus, but no awareness of **repentance**. Repentance is far more than sorrow, since it is clear that there is a type of worldly grief that leads to death, while godly sorrow for sin produces **repentance** (2 Cor. 7:10). When we recite our testimonies, when in the timeline were we compelled to turn from our sin and follow Christ with everything? When did we receive a hatred for sin and a burning love for God? When did we understand what our sin was compared to God's holiness? Repentance is more than being sorry or feeling sorrow. It is a change of thinking, action, and feeling. Repentance at the point of salvation guarantees continued repentance as we battle sin the rest of our lives.

**They trusted in themselves** - Part of trusting oneself is deceiving oneself. When people trust themselves, they actually tell a lie on multiple levels and begin to believe it. **1 John 1:6-10** says we can

lie at three levels: 1) if we **say we have fellowship with God, but walk in darkness**, we lie and do not practice truth 2) If we **say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us**, 3) If we **say we have not sinned, we make him (God) a liar, and his word is not in us**.

Notice the tie in with deception in what we say, who we deceive (others, ourselves, and God Himself), and the contradiction between the lie and the truth. When we trust in and deceive ourselves, we cannot walk in the light, cannot **see the light properly**, and what is left is darkness. That is why Jesus issued another warning to those who *think* they are walking in the light.

- **Prudence in the light**

Notice that there is a call to be prudent, or a warning, that is literally one of "keep an eye on, note carefully, or pay attention to." It was a call to self examination. Why? Because self deception can easily convince ourselves that we are not only ok, but that the darkness within us is actually light. That is really the height of deception. It's the patient with a terminal disease who is in denial of the problem. It is one who has alienated every person in their life that still believes they are in the right and **everyone** else is in the wrong. For an unbeliever, it is convincing themselves that they will deserve heaven someday, or that hell will not be that bad, or that it will all get sorted out in the end.

For believers, this caution is also prominent. We can easily slip into the throws of neutrality, or become desensitized to the light, where we no longer have a soft heart, clear eyes, or an ongoing desire for Christ. When this happens, the darkness creeps in and our thinking is deformed into selfish, prideful, and self-glorifying action. How does this happen?

#### **Are we growing desensitized to the light? *What are the warning signs?***

**Familiarity** - We get caught up in rhythms and **they** become the focus, rather than the greater purpose. "Lifelong familiarity with the rhythms of the gospel can dull us to its trembling realities so that we listen to it with the same vitality with which we read the weather report."<sup>1</sup>

We do what we do because it is right, but it is also effective! We are not going through motions as an end in itself, but all that we do should renew our thinking, help us put off sin, and draw us closer to Christ.

**Sin** - The absolutely easiest way to be blind to the light is to allow sin be built up. Sin becomes a wall built to block relationships in marriage that need to get knocked down daily, and sin in our personal life become scales over our eyes. Each time we sin and leave it there; each time we sin and fail to repent, confess, and turn; each time we get comfortable with our sin, our ability to see the light becomes more and more dim. Sin wrecks our mind, and the light fails guide our path. Sometimes we then think there is something wrong with the light! Worship becomes stale. Reading Scripture becomes dull. Prayer becomes lifeless. Fellowship is avoided. And we wonder what happened to everything around us! Sin blinds us to real realities.

**Missing Jesus** - Just like the Pharisee's, we can do all things and miss Jesus. This happens when we forget who Jesus is, when we forget our ever present need, and when we focus on our needs rather than on the Person of Jesus. How many days go by in your life when you don't think about Jesus at all? How often have you engaged on Sunday morning never actually thought about the Person and work of Christ? These are warning signs that something needs to change.

<sup>1</sup> Kent Hughes, "Luke, vol. 2", p. 17.

**How do we make sure we do not miss Jesus?**

**Confession and prayer** - Instead of only asking God for things or thanking Him for what He has given, have we spent time confessing our sins, both those above and below the water line, in order to have clear eyes.

**Contemplate His Word** - There is more than our Scripture intake than simply reading, but we add *contemplation or meditation*. This means that we let Scripture search us, giving time for introspection, and to be honest with the clear and deep truths (love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, love your wife like Jesus loved you, etc)

**Commitment to real fellowship** - Time together helps us see ourselves clearly. Unfortunately fellowship becomes a margin in our lives (it happens when we have time) rather than a priority. Scripture is clear on the value and priority of fellowship.

"...And since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful. **And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**"

**Hebrews 10:21-25**

"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. **But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today", that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**"

**Hebrews 3:12-13**

- **Power of light**

Jesus concludes with the truth about the power of the light. If our eye is clear and our body is full of light, it will affect every part of us. In other words, when the light comes in without the hindrance of blindness, all things change, and all things are possible. Our thinking, attitudes, affections, motivations, and actions can change. The light brings a new passion for the truth, and the more we see the light, the more we want.

Have you become desensitized to the light? Have you felt or seen the warning signs? What needs to change?

**Questions to Discuss:**

- **What are ways that lack sight in terms of: *our own repentance and seeing Jesus clearly***
- **Do you ever feel desensitized toward the light: *worship, the Word, or prayer***
- **What are areas that we can be blinded or deceived in? **What lies do we believe about ourselves, the church, others, etc?****
- **How do we fight being blind? **What role does fellowship with other believers play? **What level of priority is it in your life?******