

Luke 11:14-36 - Signs of the Times

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

If you have Bibles with you in one form or the other, open them to Luke 11. We're continuing our journey through Luke.

Luke, and now we have finished this section, and I'm glad we've taken an extended time dealing with this section on prayer. Now we get to a little bit different scene, and we begin to see the opposition come to Jesus.

Now let's read. You can follow with me as I read, and it's going to be a rather long section from verse 14 all the way down through verse 36.

Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and people marveled.

[1 : 12] But some of them said, he cast out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons. While others, detest him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.

But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste. And a divided household falls.

So, and if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say, I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out?

Therefore, they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

And when a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor, in which he trusted, and divides his spoil.

[2 : 26] So whoever is not with me is against me. And whoever does not gather with me scatters. And when the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest.

And finding none, it says, I will return to my house from which I came. And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order.

And then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself. And they enter and dwell there. And the state of that person is worse than at first.

And as he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed.

But he said, blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it. And when the crowds were increasing, he began to say, this generation is an evil generation.

[3 : 34] 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.

Behold, someone 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. 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. And 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.

[4 : 45] And if then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright. It's when a lamp with its rays gives you light.

Let's bow in prayer and ask the giver of God's word to come and now give us insight into his word. Father, we pray that you would come and be our teacher.

There is so much here that you would say to us. But our hearts need your work. So would you come and make our hearts soft?

Make them fertile ground for the planting of your word. Use my own foolishness to bring us into the light of wisdom. The wisdom that comes from you and not from man.

So would you come and speak to us in this time as we study together. And we pray in the name of the living word. Even Jesus.

[5 : 55] Amen. You know, we're moving from a very pleasant situation where Jesus' disciples come to him. And they ask that great question. He says, Lord, teach us to pray.

You know, how do you pray? I mean, you are praying and they've observed him praying all this time. And so they want to learn. And that really shows a great posture of what it means to be a disciple.

And so Jesus teaches them. And in so doing, teaches them at the core of what he taught was who it is to whom they pray.

It's not the mechanics of prayer. But it's the object of prayer. It's the one for whom they bow.

But now as we come out of that, and we're going to see more and more of this. We're going to see opposition. Beginning to face Jesus.

[6 : 56] Because now we see in a lot of ways a contrast between the posture of a disciple. And then the posture of an unbelieving world.

And so as we encounter this, there's so much in this text. What I want us to do is really look at what we can learn about this unbelief that we see demonstrated in the world.

And what we're going to see here is that opposition always comes. Opposition will always come when the kingdom advances.

This is a fact for us as believers. So when we see the kingdom move here in our community. When we see it move in our own lives. We will see and experience opposition to that kingdom.

But one of the things about this opposition is the opposition is not necessarily over the facts.

[8 : 07] But the implications. One of the things here when we look at this scene. Is there something very striking here to me.

And every time I read through the gospels I always marvel at this. Jesus is now in this group of people. And he casts out a demon from this man who was unable to speak.

It's a very obvious miracle. And Luke says that everybody marveled. And then they got ticked off.

So what is there about a miracle that Jesus performs that gets people so upset? And look at the two responses they have.

One they're ascribing the work that he does to the devil himself. Or even in the face of this very obvious miracle.

[9 : 10] They're looking at Jesus and says. Alright prove. That you can do this miracle. Prove. That you have authority.

How do we know. Who you are. And that you are legit. Even in the face of. What just happened. Unfortunately. What we see in these people. Is all too normal. And that is.

That is a picture. In many ways. As all of this section is that I've read through. A picture of what unbelief looks like.

And we're not going to be able to go through and examine all of this down into the details. We're going to take kind of a high altitude look at this. But I think in this passage. We are given a great picture here.

[10 : 11] Of what unbelief. Really looks like. And I will say this too. That as we look at this. And we think about unbelief. The first thing that's going to come to our minds.

Is unbelief out there. This is what we're going to experience. From the world. And from people outside of the kingdom.

But it's not just them. It's us too. So. With that in mind. What do we learn here.

About this whole nature of unbelief. The first thing. We see is unbelief. Belief. Is. Intentional.

It's not accidental. It's not just out of ignorance. It's purposeful. It's interesting here.

[11:11] As we see this section. In some ways. Luke kind of frames it. By this demand. Of this generation. For signs.

For Jesus. To do something. To validate. His authority. To do what he does. And to say. What he does. And so we have it up there.

At the front. You know. That they're. They're seeking signs. And Luke. Again. Gives us insight. They're not just wanting more evidence.

They're testing. They've got enough evidence. But it's not enough for them. So they're testing. And then down later. He talks about this evil generation.

Seeks a sign. And so what is it about signs? Why is this such a problem? If we remember. We go back to Gideon.

[12:08] In Judges. And Gideon asked for signs. Repeatedly. Before. He went. To do the work that God had called him to do.

And God condescended to him. Didn't rebuke him. But actually met him. With the two signs Gideon asked for. And then gave him another one that he didn't ask for.

The problem here. Is that. They've just seen one. And they've seen a sign. That they were. They knew.

That only. Could be. Could happen. When the kingdom. The Messiah. Came. And it happened right in front of their face. And it wasn't enough.

And so they keep. Pushing. And they're asking for. On the service. What looks like. Said look. That was nice. We just need a little bit more.

[13:10] To be convinced here. But that's not what's going on. There's something much deeper. Much more insidious. In looking.

For. Evidence. So actually. Inwardly. As they're asking for. More evidence. What they're doing. Is not. Trying to draw nearer to Jesus.

They're trying to hold him off. They're pushing him away. And they themselves. Have now set up standard. A standard.

By which. They. Are going to judge. The king. And the judge himself. On his authenticity. And I think we need to understand this.

Especially when we do go out. Into the world. Unbelief. By people out there. You will hear. A lot of people will.

[14:09] Will struggle. And it says. Well. You know. Prove to me that. Jesus is who he is. Prove to me. That the bible is the word of God. Prove to me that God exists. You know. Prove to me.

All of this. And so. Our challenge is. A lot of times. We take. That posture. And it says. You know. If I just give them. Enough proofs.

Enough evidence. They're going to believe. Because we know. Our faith is rational. It is based on. Real knowledge.

And real truth. And so. We think. That all we've got to do. Is just. Let's clarify the issue here. Make a good case. Sometimes.

That issue. May be. Intellectual. Because we know. Great stories. Of people who. When they heard. The arguments. Their heart was changed. But that is not.

[15:08] Normally the case. Normally. The problem. The problem is not. Intellectual. It's moral. They're not struggling.

Over evidence. It's the implications. Romans 1. Paul lays this out for us. Very clearly.

Romans 1 verse 18. He says to us. For the wrath of God. Is revealed. Against all. All ungodliness. And unrighteousness. Of men.

Who. By their. Unrighteousness. Suppress. The truth. Suppressing the truth. Is an active.

Verb. Unbelievers. And Paul goes on. To say through that text. They have all the evidence. They need. They can see the glory. Of God. In creation. They can see it.

[16:05] In all of the world. And they know it. But they won't accept it. And so they're actively. At work. Keeping it. Underwrapped. So.

It does not. Interfere. Because unbelievers. Those who do not believe. Have built a world.

Shaped. Around themselves. We have a clash. Of kingdoms. Here. Jesus comes. And we see that. Even as Jesus. Talks about the whole thing.

With a kingdom. Divided against himself. And the strong man. And so forth. Well Jesus. Is the strong man. Who's come. To take over. And to occupy. To take the man's goods.

He is the one. Who's coming. But see. We built a whole different world. It's built around us. In our own autonomy. And if the reality.

[17:01] Of Jesus coming. If that's true. I have a dilemma. Am I going to continue.

To serve me. Or am I going to bow to another king. And we don't bow easily.

And so we use these kind of arguments. You know. We've got a good thing going. You know. Even those Jews of that day. They had their system. They had their world. And they had it all controlled.

And Jesus comes in.

And disrupts everything. And so as we do evangelism. Even. As we encounter non-believers. There are going to be times. We have to be prepared.

To defend. The rationality. Of our faith. And that it is built. On sound thinking. Sound logic. It is reasonable. And you know.

[18:02] We have to be able. To defend that. But that will not win the day. What we're struggling with. Is a heart. That is in rebellion.

Against knowledge. That is already aware of. And it just refuses to bow. And so that changes. The way we do evangelism. One thing. Instead of just.

Spending all our time. Arguing. We need to spend. A lot more time praying. And instead of just.

Challenging people. With the truth.

We need to focus. On the implications. Of that truth. And instead of just. Calling them to an understanding. We need to call them. To repentance. We are. When we do evangelism.

We're calling people. To worship. We're calling them. To bow. And that is where. As Jesus said. At the end of that last section.

[18:59] Where God gives his Holy Spirit. That's what he has to do. So that they'll turn. But is that. The same way with us.

God. Is that. The same way with us. Is that. Eh. Yeah. How many promises. In the scripture do you know.

How many are you aware of. See. When we come to Christ. When we first believe. Everything doesn't change overnight. I still.

I still. Have a heart. That has. Developed a reality. Where I am the center. I am in control. I determine.

What my life will be. I determine. What values. Will be. I determine. The definition. Of what good is. And so. Life. Revolves. Around me.

[19:56] And when the truth of God. Comes. And I hear these promises. They can be very. Very. Disruptive. We heard in the.

The men's retreat. This last weekend. And. One moment. I really thought. I'd. Asked the wrong speaker. To come. Because it was getting.

Hot. In the room. At least for me. And he was. In a sense. In a way. Delving into. An area of. In my life. That I was.

Where I was. Refusing to bow. And it was. Because of situations. You know. It was a hard situation. And.

In that situation. I know his promise. That he is good. I know. His control. Over all things. I know. Up here. That everything.

[20:54] He gives me. Is a gift. But yet. I whine. I complain. I get angry. I get angry. With him. And say. You absolutely. Do not love me. And I've got.

All the evidence. In the world. How much more. Evidence. Do I need? I have a savior.

Who came. And died. And was raised again. What more. Do I need to see? The problem is not.

Evidence. The problem is worship. Worship. And when the king comes.

He demands. Worship. For himself. Alone. And I have to get off the throne. Unbelief.

[21:56] Belief. Calls me instead. To give thanks. Instead of complaining. Belief. Belief. Calls me to rejoice. Instead of my incessant whining.

Belief. Calls me to trust. And rest. And give up. The fight. Because.

I want to set a new sheriff's in town. But a new king. Has come to the throne. Secondly.

Unbelief. Is intentional. But it is also. Unreasonable. Or we could say. It is. Unbelief is irrational.

It's crazy. The arguments put forth. Here. To Jesus. Are silly. And he.

[23:01] And he very. Calmly. And gently. Straightens out. These arguments. This is why. Satan is. Throwing out his own. Demons. And Jesus said.

That's dumb. How's this kingdom. Going to stand. If they follow your. Rational thinking. And so. It's just. Unreasonable.

Unreasonable. That they would come up. With this kind. Of a defense. In what Jesus does. He moves then. From that. And he's moving them. Towards those implications.

Because. You know. If. And this is where. They don't want to go. Because. If. The king. Has actually come. He's taken over.

There's a. A great book. On apologetics. I really like. It was written. A couple years ago. By Os Guinness. It's called.

[23 : 58] Fool's Talk. And in this. Book. He talks about. These two poles. That.

Unbelievers. Have to. Wrestle with. Because. One of those poles. Is. The pole of dilemma. And let me just read.

What he says here. The dilemma pole. Expresses the logic. Of the fact. That the more consistent. People are. To their own. View of reality.

Which is highly inconsistent. The less close. They are to God's reality. And the more likely. They are to feel their dilemma. In other words. The more they see.

This deep. In consistency. The more they get. Away from God's. Reality. And close to themselves. And become aware of. This false.

[24 : 55] Unsubstantial. View of reality. They're in a dilemma. Because now they see. Very clearly.

That what they have constructed. Is a house. Made on sand. And. That's what they are. And. But then he goes on. There's another pole. It says. The diversion pole. Expresses the fact.

That the less consistent. People are. To their own view of reality. And the closer they are. To God's. The more they have. They must find. A diversion. In other words.

All right. They can't live. Over here. And. See clearly. Their. Very. False. Construction.

Of reality. Because that produces. A dilemma. But over here. If they start getting close. To the real idea. Of reality. That.

[25 : 51] Produces. A dilemma. And so. What they. Turn to. In the face of. All of this. To avoid.

Reality. Is diversion. In other words. They have to hide. From the truth. And not face.

The real issues. Of life. So that. The life. Of inconsistency. In which they live. Is not disrupted. It's relatively.

Comfortable. But to do that. They have to avoid. The questions of. What is the meaning of life? Who am I? Where do I come from? Why am I here?

Where am I going? What is death like? What's on the other side? And so they live. Because they can't face those.

[26 : 47] Because they take them to. Reality. They live in diversion. One of those diversions. Which he speaks about. He said. He refers to.

As objects of mass distraction. Are these. Or the ones you have. In your pockets.

Through all the networks. Anything. Entertainment. You know. I like this. Well. I don't like it. There's this commercial. On TV. And I can't remember. If it's AT&T.;

And Verizon. But Mark Wahlberg. Is out there. Talking about. Makes this statement. Is we want. Our entertainment. Now. And we want it. Everywhere we go.

We can't go anywhere. Without our shows. Without our movies. Without our sports. All of these things. And we live this life. The world lives this life. Of total diversion.

[27 : 43] To escape. Reality. To avoid reality. And where they come to.

Is just. It's irrational. The positions. That they take. Are so inconsistent. And we can see it. But it doesn't bother them.

They just don't think about it. You know. Ideas. That. There are no moral absolutes. Except. That there are no moral absolutes.

As soon as you say that. You declare an absolute. They want to say. That we. There. There is no God. Who shaped us. Or created things. We have evolved.

From these little cells. That began at the bottom. Of some pond. Somewhere. And then they want to say. In the same breath. We have great dignity. And value.

[28 : 44] And they cannot see. The problem. With those two statements. And so. Unbelief. That people. That we're dealing with.

Is irrational. It cannot be rational. Because the closer. You get to rationality. The closer. You get to God's reality. And the implications. Become clear. So. But we're enlightened.

We're. We're. We've come to Jesus. Yeah. I think. I can actually control my life. I think. I know what's best. I think. I think. That. My little efforts. Of making sure. [29 : 45] That my dishwasher. Is loaded the proper way. Gives me value. But. That's true. That. Who's irrational. Unbelief.

It's intentional. But it's crazy. Because I know. The one. Who shapes. All things. I know. The one. Who gives me value.

I know him. and I still don't bow. I live in this delusion that somehow it's all me.

The reality is I am powerless. I am helpless. And I'm just a creature.

But if the king has come, he has come to do so much in me that I could never do and to control my life in such a good way that I could never accomplish.

[31 : 06] Wouldn't it be rational just to submit? Unbelief is intentional.

Unbelief is irrational. Unbelief is also short-sighted. We have this little section there. In some ways, it really looks kind of out of place where Jesus is saying all these things and then you have this mother pops up and says, blessed is the woman who bore you and who nursed you.

And then Jesus, you would have thought this nice little old woman here, he would have been nice to. But he very immediately basically says, no, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

Because see, what she's done, I mean, she was not doing anything overtly evil. But it was her idea of what blessedness is.

Her idea of blessedness was something innate about her. Something she did. She was able to accomplish. And that was a very prevalent idea in that society. Because if women were not able to bear children, they were really pariahs.

[32 : 30] They were outcasts. They were seen as rejects by God. And we've seen a lot of examples of that through the scriptures. So what her idea here, her glory, her value is found in a natural function of her life.

Who she is as a woman and so forth. But what she really kind of reflects is because of our intentional rejection of submission to the king, in our irrational recreation of reality, reality, we still end up empty and we've got to find something to fill that void.

And so we fill it, we try to, in vain, with many lesser things. We go on and read down a little farther in Romans, Romans 1, 23 through 26 or through 25, I mean, Paul writes, claiming to be wise, there's the, you know, there's all of this other, again, they became fools and exchanged the glory of God, the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore, God gave them up to the lust of their hearts, to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator.

And that's what this woman was doing. All of a sudden now, her whole world, an idea of goodness and blessedness and identity was based on something that she could do, not on the immortal king himself.

[34 : 51] And so Jesus counters that blessedness and basically calls them again to submission to the king. you know, it's not what you do but it's it's hearing the word of God himself and keeping it and basically it is bowing.

Blessedness is bowing to the true God and not some artificial thing we've set up for ourselves.

Blessedness is not having material resources.

It is not having a name well thought of. It is not accomplishing great things. There's so many things that we use to replace and now we're talking about us.

We use to replace that sense of blessedness. You know, we, you know, it is our job. It is our work. It is our youthful manly vigor.

And those of us who have chosen that route are very disappointed the farther in life we get.

Because, you know, we pursue this great vigor and strength and then I've got to have a hip replaced because it doesn't work anymore and I can't walk.

[36 : 12] And then you get cancer. And then you go out in the very midst of proving how youthful and vigorous you are on your bicycle.

One morning you have a heart attack. And God in heaven just smiles gently saying, you're barking up the wrong train.

This dog won't hunt. Come to the source of real life and real blessedness.

Because that it's not you. It's not what you create. It's not what you experience. It's not what you accomplish. It's who you know. It's me.

Come to the king. Unbelief we see here. It's finally broken. And I will go through this quickly.

[37 : 23] Jesus gives a parable basically or a sign. He says the only sign this evil generation is going to get is the sign of Jonah. There's a lot of debate about what this is but I think it really points us to two things.

What do we know about Jonah? Jonah was called by God to go to an evil generation in Nineveh to proclaim the gospel. In the process he was thrown overboard from this boat as dead.

These were saved. He was in the belly of a whale for three of a whale not a well. Someplace it's the same word. For three days he was resurrected on the shore went to preach to Nineveh and they repented amazingly.

One of the most wicked people on the face of the earth repented. And Jesus said this is the sign. And yes we think it is pointing to his resurrection but that resurrection says two things to me from this passage.

One is the resurrection is the ultimate sign. If Christ has been raised from the dead there's no more question.

[38 : 45] about who's king. We will bow before his throne at his feet one way or the other.

Whether you believe it or not. Whether you submit now or not. Jesus has come and because he died and it was raised again to life and exalted to the right hand of the father.

Everything is about him. He rightfully declares authority over all things.

But there's something else. It also declares God's intentions. sins. Because what he does he sends Jesus to die.

He sent Jonah to Nineveh because his heart longed for the Ninevites. Why would he send Jonah to the Ninevites unless he wanted them to repent wanted them to turn from their wickedness.

[40 : 02] God and now we see through the resurrected Christ a much more vivid a much greater demonstration of that heart of God for an evil generation.

That he would give his son to perish and then to raise him to life again to proclaim the coming of the kingdom.

Why would he do that if he didn't have the heart of a father who loved his creation and longed for those of us to be blessed to have it all.

And so he calls us to faith calls us out of our unbelief calls us to come to the one who can indeed give us life life that is rich and full.

And so that's the choice. We either come to Jesus in faith we bow before him and when we do we will know that blessedness that he promises but also know this we will bow either voluntarily or under compulsion.

[41 : 45] Jesus comes as the king and he allows no rivals us. And so he calls us to repentance to bow of our own autonomy to bow to our own rule to bow to our own control and worship at the foot of the one who loved us to his own death.

It sounds rational to me why would we not do that? let's pray. Oh Lord Jesus our hearts are hard we need you to work would you help us in our unbelief?

You promised that as we come to the father that father you would give your holy spirit you would give him great abundance we need him so would you come turn our hard hearts and hearts that believe that we might know the riches and the wealth of your kingdom we pray in Jesus name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org for more information visit us online at southwood.org to you you to here you and