



- Introduction – Winning the sweepstakes, but turning away Ed McMahon and his giant check
- Big Idea: The Sign of Jonah demands a response.
- Read Luke 11:29-32
- Pray
- In this passage, we find our Lord just a few short months away from the sorrow of His cross and the glory of His resurrection.
- At this time, the crowds following Jesus were enormous (v. 12:1), and they were awed and amazed at what He was doing and saying (v. 14).
- v. 29a
 - Here Jesus is responding to those mentioned in verse 16.
 - “*Wicked generation*” – Jesus is not talking about a distinct few; He is describing the overall condition of the crowds.
 - Theirs was not, by and large, an obvious outward wickedness, like people boast about today. It was, rather, a much more sinister and deceptive an inner, spiritual wickedness.
 - Over and over again, Jesus makes clear that the people, and especially the religious leaders, were drowning themselves in self-righteous delusions.
 - Self-righteous people won’t repent because they cannot see their need for forgiveness. Blessed are desperate sinners who face their need for rescue from sin, death and hell.
- v. 29a – Jesus gives the reason as to why that generation was so wicked: “*This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign.*”
 - If asked to list examples of wickedness in our culture, I doubt many would list the fact that people are demanding a sign from Christ.
 - Why is this so wicked? Why does Jesus single out the people’s sign-seeking as a hallmark of their wickedness?
 - The attitude of the heart is the issue here.
 - They were not sincerely seeking for answers. Rather, they were continually sending out smokescreens against the call of Christ and the conviction of sin He placed upon their hearts.
 - Think about it: Considering all the miracles that Jesus had performed, how could they have possibly been demanding another?

Jesus changed water into wine...yet the crowds demanded a sign... Wherever He went, demons had trembled and fled...yet the crowds demanded a sign. He had over-flooded fishing nets, fed the five thousand, stilled the storm, and walked on the waves...yet their hard hearts remained unsatisfied.

He beat back blindness, banished bleeding, defeated deafness, demolished dropsy, drove out demons, leveled leprosy, prevailed over paralysis, and stamped out every sort of sickness...and yet the crowds still demanded a sign. He healed the nobleman's boy, the widow's son, the centurion's servant, a hemorrhaging woman, and a paralytic who was lowered through a roof on his mat. On occasions, He had healed entire crowds in the thousands of people... yet, the crowds demanded a sign?

He knew their thoughts before they spoke them...yet they required confirmation. He annihilated their every argument against Him...yet they wanted more proof. He fulfilled the prophecies, predicted the future, and preached with an authority that no one could not deny... yet, they demanded a sign.

And if all that were not enough, He clearly demonstrated His unique power over even death. He resurrected the son of a widow at Nain. With a word, He restored Jairus' dead daughter to life. And even after four long days in the grave, our Lord miraculously raised Lazarus to new and abundant life...and yet—incidentally, unbelievably, outrageously—the crowds demanded a sign! The wicked, adulterous, self-absorbed, self-seeking, self-justifying spiritually blind generation still wanted to cast the blame on Jesus for the outrageous stubbornness of their unrepentant hearts.

And so Jesus decries the crowds, and He does so with such vehemence because their demand for a sign was clearly not a sincere inquiry. It was, rather, a smokescreen for their self-pardoning, self-focused, empty shell of religion. Their demand for a sign was a wicked excuse to deny the call of Christ and suppress the conviction of sin He placed on their hearts. Moreover, by this demand for a sign, they were essentially telling Jesus that their stubborn unbelief was His fault, not theirs. They were calling Christ on the carpet for the hardness in their own hearts, thinking “If and only if you perform the specific miracle I want you to perform will I follow you.” This is the height of self-centered unrighteousness.

But, even in the face of their wickedness and hypocrisy, there is grace from God, for God will yet grant the Sign of Jonah.

-- v. 29b-30 – What is the “Sign of Jonah?”

-- (Recapitulate the story of Jonah.)

-- Jonah emerged as if from the dead with a message about the truth of judgment, the need for repentance, and the hope of salvation to the Ninevites.

- Matthew 12:39-40 – (Parallel account) – “[Jesus] answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”
 - “The Sign of Jonah” is the death (as Jonah was thrown overboard), burial (as Jonah spent three days in the belly of the whale), and resurrection of Jesus Christ (as Jonah was spit back on dry land).
 - v. 30 – “As Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites” – Just as Jonah’s resurrection came with a message of repentance and salvation, so too does our Lord’s, only Christ’s resurrection proclaims the prospect of salvation to everyone, not just Nineveh.
 - Thus, the sign of Jonah is the miraculous message of salvation that only Christ’s resurrection can proclaim.
- Why does Jesus emphasize the Sign of Jonah so fervently?

1.) The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an unavoidable and undeniable fact of history.

- Simply put: The resurrection of Jesus Christ is as certain a truth as any indisputable fact of history.
- No respected historians deny that Christ’s tomb was empty. Jesus’ body was gone. If it were not, the apostle’s proclamations of Christ’s resurrection would have been very easily refuted. Just produce His body.
- Almost immediately after Jesus’ death, history records that Jesus’ followers began proclaiming His resurrection.
- Apart from His resurrection from the dead, every other attempt to explain the empty tomb is dubious at best.
 - The Conspiracy Theory (“The disciples stole the body.”)
 - This is the only alternate explanation offered by early history—that the disciples stole Jesus’ body.
 - First of all, guards who fail like this were executed, not paid.

More importantly, however, it is simply preposterous to believe that all of the disciples would have willingly suffered persecution and martyrdom for something they knew to be a lie. There could be no possible motive for it. Lies are always told for some selfish advantage. What advantage did the so-called “conspirators” derive from their alleged “lie?” They were hated, scorned, persecuted, excommunicated, imprisoned, tortured, exiled, crucified, boiled alive, roasted, beheaded, disemboweled and fed to lions—hardly a catalog of perks! No, only a

personal encounter with the gloriously risen Lord could have transformed the cowardly disciples who fled from the Garden of Gethsemane to the passionate apostles who forsook all, even life, in the name of Jesus Christ.

- The Wrong Tomb Theory (“The women and disciples went to the wrong tomb.”)
 - This theory cannot explain Christ’s resurrection appearances to hundreds of followers.
 - Also, if this were the case, then why couldn’t the fierce and powerful opposition to Christ produce His body?
- The Swoon Theory (“Jesus merely fainted on the cross and was revived in the coolness of the tomb.”)
 - The Romans simply never bungled a crucifixion.
 - How could a tortured, blood-covered, emaciated Jesus, without food or water for three days, move the stone, overwhelm the guards, and then convince everyone that He had been gloriously resurrected from the dead?
- The Evil Twin Theory (“Jesus’ had a twin brother who stole His body and pretended to be His brother resurrected.”)
 - The very existence of this theory demonstrates just how desperate we can be to make excuses to deny Christ.
- J.P Moreland – “The tomb of Jesus was empty, and intellectual integrity requires one to admit that naturalistic explanations are simply inadequate. The most reasonable explanation of the empty tomb is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.”

2.) The resurrection of Jesus Christ an irreplaceable tenet of true Christian faith.

- 1 Corinthians 15:14-19 – “*And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.*”
- If the resurrection were false, then we should all just give up and go home, because we would have no hope and no reason to celebrate today.
- If, however, Christ’s resurrection from the dead is true, then it ought to captivate, motivate, and dominate every aspect of all that we are, all that we do, and all that we desire.

-- There cannot nor will there ever be a greater, more important miracle than the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is the ultimate sign of all possible signs ever conceived... It is God's greatest gift... our Master's main message... and our Savior's supreme statement of salvation. It is bliss for the broken... life for the lowly... and peace for the poor in spirit. It is the highest hope of the hopeless... the greatest goal of the godly... God's perfect promise for the penitent... and the sweetest song of our Savior who has paid the price of our pardon. There is not now—nor will there ever be—a miracle so magnificent, a sign so sublime, or a proclamation so perfect as the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

If a money tree that grows a limitless supply of cash miraculously sprung up in my lawn, that tree would still be worthless when compared to this resurrection... for, while money may bring wealth for a while, only the resurrection brings hope that can never perish, spoil, or fade. If I owned a magic wand that could instantly cure anyone at all from any disease whatsoever, that wand would seem futile at best in the light of the resurrection of our Lord... for while it may bring good health in this brief life, only the resurrection of Christ guarantees the incomparable glory of life everlasting.

Let me ask you, then: Are you wholeheartedly embracing this incomparably Good News today as your only hope, your primary purpose, and your everything in this life? Is His resurrection from the dead the fountain of your foremost joy and the greatest desire of your heart? If not, might I be so bold as to ask you: What are you waiting for? What more evidence could you possibly need? If the resurrection of Christ does not seal the discussion, then what additional miracle could possibly make a difference? Is the truthfulness of Christ's death and resurrection really the stumbling block for you, or is it an excuse to avoid the undeniable consequences of such as astonishing, game-changing truth?

-- *If you have heard nothing else today, please hear this, because it is the main point of this text and the most crucial truth of life...*

3.) The Sign of Jonah demands a response.

Jesus didn't die on a cross and rise from the grave so that we could "leave our options open." He didn't pay history's highest cost so that we could "have it our way." Make no mistake, this is no either/or proposition. And it isn't just one possibility or something that is true only those who happen to believe it. The

resurrection of Jesus Christ is an undeniable reality for everyone, and everyone is required to respond!

- Decide for yourself: Is the resurrection of Jesus true or not?
 - If, in spite of the overwhelming evidence, you believe that it did not happen, then we who believe are pitiful fools, and you are free to go out and live in whatever way you can get away with.
 - If, however, the resurrection of Jesus is true, then you absolutely must do something about it. You either submit to it and are saved, or reject it and are condemned for your sin. Because of the resurrection, Christ's life, His message, and His call upon you ought to be your life, your focus, and your desire on this earth and forever.
- Remember who proclaims this message of resurrection.
 - While this puny Polish pastor is the one whose lips are moving, the message, rooted in and acquired from God's Word, is from the Lord. The sign of Jonah—that is the resurrection of Christ—is not my sign; it is from God in the flesh. And since it is God's sign to each one of us, then each one of us has absolutely no option but to respond to it. You can either deny it and die or receive it and live.
 - Will you hear and respond to Christ today, or will you deny His call upon your life?
- v. 31-32
 - The Men of Nineveh repented to the selfish prophet, Jonah.
 - The Queen of Sheba did everything in her power to come and hear Solomon (1 Kings 10).
 - We have the testimony of the One who is greater than all.
- Alphabetic names of Christ

Nineveh heard the cowardly, spiteful Jonah, yet they believed and repented. The Queen of Sheba heard the wisdom of a man too foolish to follow his own wise words, yet she heeded the words God gave him nonetheless. What judgment will fall on us if we choose to reject the priceless truth of our perfect Savior! What condemnation must come upon those who demand another sign and trample underfoot the kindness and mercy of the Son of God made Man!

- v. 31 – “The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.”

-- v. 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 one greater than Jonah is here.”

-- I say all of this, not out of condemnation, but out of a love that refuses to ignore what really matters.

-- Two essential truths of Easter:

1. The very worst thing anyone can ever do in this life is to reject the truth of Jesus Christ.

-- Note: To ignore it is to reject it.

2. The only choice that will really matter in the end is the decision to repent of your sins, believe in Jesus Christ, and give Him your life.

-- Conclusion

-- You and I have been given history’s greatest message by history’s greatest messenger, and we are accountable to respond.

-- How will you respond this Easter?

-- G.O.S.P.E.L.

-- Invitation