

2010 Slogan - Whatever It Takes!

Stewardship Theme: Let's Give God What He Wants!

Sermon: Our God Is Greater

Text: Luke 11:29-36

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Introduction: It may be that I am just getting older, and after all, I have had eyeglasses since fifth grade. This happens more often than I will admit with my wife in the room, but sometimes I don't see well. I'll look all over (OK, well not *all* over) and not be able to find a particular item. Teresa will immediately find the object and give it to me - and without the slightest bit of sarcasm or ridicule, too.

Some people just never find what they are looking for.

We all know people who are complainers - those souls who talk about rain coming on a cloudless day. These people are almost invariably negative and pessimistic. For the most part, people will avoid them.

Today, I need to be careful here that I do not leave you with the wrong impression about Jesus. Jesus was a positive person who was doing great and wonderful acts of kindness. Because of his charismatic personality and the miracles that were being reported, Jesus was drawing larger crowds in his ministry at every place along the way to Jerusalem.

Yet, I think it is important to offer this corrective. Jesus did not get up in every meeting and say "God loves you and so do I." He was not the Robert Schuler or Joel Osteen of his generation. In fact, sometimes Jesus could really be critical. He would condemn, ridicule, and chastise especially those people who should have known better and behaved differently. I certainly am not painting Jesus as a constant critic, but there are those times that:

I. Jesus Complains about His Generation (v. 29)

Luke 11:29 (NIV) ²⁹As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.

As the audiences grew larger and larger with Jesus' notoriety, there came opportunities to define the real purpose of his ministry - to answer questions.

In Mark [8:11-13](#)), Jesus is asked for a sign not by the “crowds” but by the Pharisees. Jesus responds with the same answer as here and in Matthew, but then sighs deeply and then just goes away. He’s deeply disappointed with what he hears.

A. They demanded a sign.

But Jesus did not require or want their authorization for his ministry. Jesus spoke for God, His Father. Miracles aren’t needed. What is needed is a “new” heart.

Jesus had already been tempted at the beginning of his ministry ([Mt. 4:9-12](#)) to perform the spectacular in order to get noticed and validated. Jesus’ credentials did not come from man, though, but from God. Proof is never convincing for those who do not want to believe. “Faith is more than response to evidence, and to the one who will not trust, final proof is never enough.” - Craddock, *Luke*, p. 157

It is Jesus’ teaching ministry that is of primary importance. There are worse things than not being healed. You might remember what Jesus said to the man he had healed at the pool. [John 5:14 \(NIV\)](#) ¹⁴Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”

Jesus was concerned about the inner-person. While signs and wonders are meant to help faith along, it is still by *hearing* that faith comes. Miracles do not prove anything because they can be counterfeited like in the time of Moses’ going against Pharaoh’s magicians or they can simply be attributed to demonic power like Jesus’ experience in last week’s text.

The problem Jesus had with the crowd was:

B. Their motives were evil.

The religious leaders especially were not trying to get Jesus recognized as the Messiah. They were actually trying to find fault and discredit him. He was not one of them, and they certainly were not pre-approving his sermons.

It is one thing to listen to God’s Word with an open mind. It is yet another to always be looking for ways to find fault with a speaker. Preaching and teaching is relational. If you don’t like me, I’ll always be wrong. If I do something, you will always have a better way.

Illus. In an early ministry...

Some of the people's motives were evil because they were trying to undermine Jesus' authority and competing for the same disciples. Jesus calls the crowds "wicked," i.e., evil. This same Greek word is used later in [v. 34](#) to describe some people's eyes.

II. Jesus Complains about His Reception ([vv. 30-32](#))

[Luke 11:30-32 \(NIV\)](#) ³⁰For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹The 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. ³²The 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.

Jonah was around in the 8th century B.C. He was certainly not one of God's willing servants. You might recall the story? Jonah booked passage on a boat to what is now Spain. He wanted to get as far away as possible from his assignment. En route, Jonah was swallowed up by a large fish and vomited up on some beach before he would consider preaching to the people of Nineveh. Nineveh was located in present day Iraq some 220 miles northwest of Bagdad.

But these were Assyrians and his enemies. Yet even Jonah's reluctant preaching produced repentance. Jesus was saying, listen, back then:

A. Gentiles were more spiritually astute ([vv. 30-31ab](#)). (audience)

The population of Nineveh did not have the Law or Moses. For the most part, they had not been exposed to prophets from God. Yet in spite of all the lack of advantages, the king and the people of Nineveh repented and turned to God.

The Queen of the South, more commonly called the Queen of Sheba, came from what is modern day Yemen to Jerusalem. She came with great wealth, a large entourage, and not a small amount of curiosity. After hearing about Israel's God, she had to investigate for herself. So she traveled thousands of miles to hear God's spokesman. After meeting with Solomon herself, she was convinced of God's greatness.

Both the Assyrians and the queen after hearing about God, repented. And yet, when in the very presence of God, the Jews of Jesus' time would reject both the message and the messenger who had been sent from the Heavenly Father.

B. Jesus is greater than others who *were* received (v. 31c). (speaker)

Jesus is no ordinary representative of God. He is God's one and only Son. Jesus is certainly greater than a reluctant minor prophet in the O.T. He is also greater than Solomon, even though:

I Kings 10:23 (NIV) ²³King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth.

What is meant when Jesus declares “**and now one greater than Solomon is here?**” Jesus is not claiming an earthly kingdom, nor is he claiming great physical wealth. Jesus is saying: I am the Messiah from the line of David; I'm the one for whom you've been waiting.

Jesus did not so much quote the prophets and God's past speakers as he fulfilled what they had promised. In fact, you would hear him say: “it stands written, but I say to you.” Jesus not only spoke for his Father; he and the Father were one. Jesus was God come in the flesh.

Yet in some ways the message still has not changed.

C. Repentance is needed to survive judgment (v. 32). (message)

That was Jonah's message. It was John the Baptist's message. Even Jesus was saying: “you must repent.” The apostles on Pentecost also stood up and demanded the people repent so their sins could be forgiven. It is a timeless message from God.

The Apostle John, in the power of the Holy Spirit, wrote to the churches in Asia, telling them to repent. That message to the Church is still true for us today.

Revelation 3:19 - 20 (NIV) ¹⁹Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. ²⁰Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

III. Jesus Complains about Others' Bad Vision (vv. 33-36)

Luke 11:33 (NIV) ³³“No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light.

A. Light should not be withheld (v. 33)

The word of God cannot, dare not, be withheld from those around us. We have an obligation to share the light we have with others. We must say with the Apostle Paul:

Romans 1:16 (NIV) ¹⁶I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Not only is Jesus the Light of the world, so are his followers. We cannot withdraw our witness whether it be that of words or our lives in how we love others. We must be actively sharing what we know of the need for repentance and the coming judgment.

It is true that sometimes we can become discouraged, nevertheless we are still duty-bound to share the gospel of Jesus with others. Still, a person cannot give out what he has not taken in.

B. How are your eyes? (vv. 34-36)

Luke 11:34-36 (NIV) ³⁴Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. ³⁵See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. ³⁶Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you.”

Physical eyes interpret light and convert what comes in to messages which are sent to the brain. Spiritual eyes must do the same thing to interpret what God truly wants us to see and understand.

The words *bad* and *good* here refer to moral qualities. It is important to keep your eyes seeing well. It will reflect on how you live for God!

The word translated “good” in Greek *haplous*, means “single, simple, sincere.” “The word-group is most used to express such positive values as ‘free from inner discord,’ ‘innocent,’ ‘upright,’ ‘pure.’ “So when this idea of singleness and simpleness is applied to the physical eye, it probably means healthy vision, in contrast to “double vision.” - Dr. Ralph Wilson quoting *BAGD*, 86; Otto Bauernfeind, “*aplous, aplotes*,” *TDNT* 1:386-387 and I.H. Marshall, *Luke*, p. 489.

No one wants bad eyes physically (mention Chuck E.). People will go to great lengths to protect their vision. But if your eyes are bad (wicked, evil) they will not let the truth of God’s word in. It is a little like a blind man standing outside on a bright, sunshiny day. For him, nothing is perceived differently from night.

Some people will demand to see proof even though they do not have the ability to see anything. In a parable later in Luke there is a haunting, and remarkable response given to a previously rich man who finds himself after he dies, in Hades. He, now, was trying to warn his brothers of what might await them.

Luke 16:27-31 (NIV) ²⁷“He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house, ²⁸for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ ²⁹“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ ³⁰“No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ ³¹“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Friends, Jesus did rise from the dead, and some still say: “I don’t believe it!” Some saw Jesus as a servant of Satan, while others saw their Savior and Lord.

How are your eyes? Jesus wants to know. I want to know. You need to know. You can do something about poor vision with God’s help. He’ll open your eyes if you’ll only ask for understanding.

Conclusion: I sometimes wonder: “why don’t they get it?” But they did not get it when Jesus preached. I take a lot of time and effort to develop lessons and sermons. I prepare every week to speak. And I have to keep telling myself it is not the problem of the message or the messenger because not everyone “got it” even when Jesus preached. No one wants to listen to poor preaching, but great preaching is not required - open hearts are! Eventually, if your eyes are good you’ll find what you’ve been looking for.

As we draw to a conclusion this three-part stewardship series entitled: *Let’s Give God What He Wants!* I hope you understand that God wants your whole heart. If we are speaking to God in prayer, and filled with his Spirit, our heart will be truly His. The funding of our church’s work and mission will be much easier with God in possession of our hearts. I hope you see the need to follow Jesus this year and do “Whatever it Takes” because *Our God Is Greater* than anything or anyone else.