

20/20 VISION

LUKE 11:29-36

Our fundamental faith and character interpret all we see and come in contact with.

I. LOOKING FOR SIGNS (VS 29-30)

People find all sorts of reasons for not submitting their lives to Jesus Christ in faith.

- A. ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE ENCOUNTER JESUS (29a)
- B. MANY WILL REJECT JESUS (29b)
- C. MANY WILL UNDERSTAND AND RECEIVE THE SIGN (30)

II. EXCEPTIONAL VISION (VS 31-32)

Oftentimes the least likely people will understand the gospel and respond to it with faith.

- A. THE SOURCE OF GOD'S WISDOM AND POWER (31)
- B. THE NATURE OF JUDGMENT AND GRACE (32)

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EYE EXAM (VS 33-36)

People who are not guided and enlightened by god's Holy Spirit will never be able to see the miraculous nature of everyday life.

- A. THE NATURE OF LIGHT (33)
- B. SEEING FROM THE OUTSIDE IN (34)
- C. SEEING FROM THE INSIDE OUT (35)
- D. GIVING YOURSELF AN EYE EXAM (36)

20/20 Vision

Luke 11:29-36

Here is where we pick up this morning's incident. On His march to Jerusalem, Jesus stopped to heal a man who could not speak. The cause of the man's problem was demonic. Jesus cast the demon out and restored speech to the man. The man was completely healed and the crowds were amazed. Remember some were amazed into believing in Jesus. Others were amazed into fear, jealousy, and hatred. Some people actually accused Jesus of performing miracles by the power of Satan. Jesus rationally and logically destroyed that theory.

Others demanded a sign from heaven to authenticate the nature and source of Jesus' claims. Jesus will expose the evil motives of this group of people in today's text.

Jesus is going to use the example of sight to prove His point. I'm at the age now where my body is like an old car. One thing breaks down, I fix it, and then another part breaks down. One thing people struggle with as we grow older is our eyesight.

We have a friend who has loved to play golf all his life. He played every day since he retired but one day he came home all dejected and announced to his wife that he decided to quit playing golf forever. Sympathetically his wife asked him why. He said, "My eyesight has gotten so bad that once I've hit the ball, I can't see where it went."

His wife said, "Why don't you take my brother Harold with you?" to which Ozzie responded, "He's older than me!"

His wife responded, "But he has perfect vision." So Ozzie and Harold went golfing. On the first tee, Ozzie took a mighty swing and launched a huge drive. He squints as the ball travels out of his sight capacity. He turned to his brother-in-law Harold and said, "Did you see the ball?"

"Of course I did!" replied Harold, "I have perfect eyesight!"

Ozzie asked, "Where did it go?" Harold replied, "I don't remember."

Well because of bad eyesight Ozzie couldn't play golf unless he had someone who could see. The problem was that his brother-in-law had a poor memory. It only cost Ozzie a golf ball. But as we will see in this morning's text, being spiritually blind can send us to hell for an eternity.

The Bible calls out to us, whoever has eyes let them see. Whoever has ears let them hear. The Gospel message is preached every day. Here at our church it is

preached and taught faithfully. If we have ears to hear, then let us hear and receive it. God is working in lives every day. All of us who are Christians ought to be able to see God's miraculous work in our lives and even non Christians who have Christian friends ought to be able to see God working in our lives. If we eyes to see God's work, then let us see. The main idea of this morning's text is this. **OUR FUNDAMENTAL FAITH AND CHARACTER INTERPRET ALL WE SEE AND COME IN CONTACT WITH.** In other words, at the deepest level of our being, our spirits are either joined with the light of God's Holy Spirit, or the darkness of the evil one. There are no other options. It is either the one or the other. And based on which option is applied, all that we see and do is interpreted from that perspective. That perspective affects our hearts, our minds, and our emotions. We will either interpret data and make decisions based on the light of God's Holy Spirit, or the darkness of the devil.

LOOKING FOR SIGNS (VS 29-30)

In verses 29-30 we are reminded that from last week's text, there were people who were looking for signs. In other words, **PEOPLE FIND ALL SORTS OF REASONS FOR NOT SUBMITTING THEIR LIVES TO JESUS CHRIST IN FAITH.** We will soon see that it was no different for the people in Jesus' time.

In the first half of verse 29 we are reminded that all kinds of people encounter Jesus. Jesus is once again starting to attract a crowd. Those who opposed Jesus, by stirring up this controversy over His healing of the mute man, have now caused a crowd to gather. The crowd has now heard Jesus rebuke those who claimed He operated by the power and authority of the devil and shut them up.

And now they will hear Him rebuke those who were demanding a heavenly sign from Him. As strange as it sounds, many will reject Jesus as illustrated in the second half of verse 29. I want to take this opportunity to show you how it is that Bible study is done. Verses 29-32 seem to be distinct from verses 33-36. However, look at the statement Jesus makes here in verse 29. He says, "This is a wicked generation." The word for wicked is actually the common word for evil. In Greek it is *ponēros*. If you look at 34, you will see the phrase, "But when they are bad," referring to eyes. The word translated as bad is actually the same word evil used back in verse 29.

Jesus is speaking to an evil generation about their evil eyes. These people are also to be connected to those demanding a sign in verse 16 from last week's text. In verses 29-30 Jesus will use the word sign 4 times. These passages are to be interpreted in light of one another. The point Jesus is going to make is that people who ask for signs are evil because the evil inside of them will not let them see and recognize miracles. For example, in the incident that sparked this controversy, Jesus cast out a demon, healed the man, and gave him full speech. He miraculously healed the man. Is that not a miraculous sign? He has given sight to the blind, raised the dead, cast out demons, walked on water, and did tons of other miracles. What other signs did they want? What other signs could convince them?

Jesus then throws out this strange comment, "But none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Again, commentators have several possible meanings for this. This definitely refers to the Old Testament prophet Jonah. Let's quickly review the history of Jonah. Jonah was a Hebrew prophet. God wanted him to go preach a salvation message to the Ninevites. The Ninevites were one of the nations that threatened Israel's existence. The prophet was truly a Hebrew loyalist and refused to go. In fact he got on a boat and headed in the opposite direction. God threw a storm at the boat. Jonah was reluctantly thrown overboard and swallowed by an enormous fish. The fish swam him to where God wanted him to be and had the fish vomit Jonah up on the shore. Jonah then went to Nineveh, preached salvation, and the entire city of Nineveh repented and submitted to God's offer of salvation.

Some commentators say the sign Jesus is referring to is that as Jonah was God's message of holiness, judgment, and repentance to the Ninevites, Jesus was now presenting that same message to the Jews.

Another theory was that Jesus' message of salvation will be offered to Gentiles as well as Jews. Let me just make a side note here. The mission of the Hebrew nation from the beginning was that through them all nations of the earth would be blessed. But as in the case Jonah, the nation of Old Testament Israel never demonstrated much interest in fulfilling that mission. They were always interested in receiving God's blessings, but very seldom demonstrated an interest in becoming a blessing to the other nations. In Jesus, Israel finally fulfills this blessing. Even though the early Christian church primarily consisted of Jews, they quickly open up the faith to Gentile nations all over the world.

All of the facts surrounding those theories are correct and to a certain extent play into the overall emotion of the message; I think it is more simple. Listen to how the Apostle Matthew phrased Jesus' words:

"40For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so I, the Son of Man, will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights" (Matthew 12:40 / NLT).

By all accounts, Jonah should have been dead but after three days in the belly of the enormous fish, he miraculously lived. In Jesus' case, He will be publicly executed and buried. After three days in the grave, He miraculously rose from the dead. That is what Christians base everything in life and death on. At the center of our belief is the physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Everything rests on that historical fact. If indeed Jesus rose from the dead, then He is Who He said He is. He is God in the flesh and all that He commands us in the Scriptures, we must do. He is King and Lord of the entire universe. Believers willingly and joyfully bow before Him and acknowledge Him as Lord. But someday every person will bow before Him and acknowledge Him as Lord.

Verse 30 reminds us that many will understand and receive the sign. I really don't want you to miss this underlying theme that winds its way all throughout this passage. Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. His mission is to Israel. They are the nation

of faith. For the most part, the agitators are the elite Jewish leaders. Jonah went to a foreign, heathen, Gentile nation. He preached and the entire nation, including the king repented and received God's Word.

Jesus is now speaking to primarily a Jewish audience. They should easily recognize a message from God. But they will prove how wicked they are by their response to Jesus and His message. We know the religious leaders in fact did reject Jesus and together with the Romans, had Jesus executed.

Here is the repeated slap in the face. Jonah, a prophet of God went to pagan unbelievers and they received the Word of God. Jesus Who was God in the flesh spoke to and worked among the chosen people of faith, and they rejected Him and His message. Jesus is making a comparison between people who claimed to be faithful believers and pagans. And the pagans come out on top of the comparison.

But the point is that although many of the religious elite leaders of the day rejected Jesus, many Jews did believe in Jesus and because of their faith and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the Christian church was born. And through this early Jewish movement, Gentiles from all over the world were added to the church. It's not much different today. The power of changed lives and the message of the Gospel is preached and lived every day. People still need to make a decision as to Who Jesus is. But the sad fact is that PEOPLE FIND ALL SORTS OF REASONS FOR NOT SUBMITTING THEIR LIVES TO JESUS CHRIST IN FAITH.

I don't know why this continues to surprise me, but often some of my unbelieving friends will show incredibly deep insight into Christian truths. In verses 31-32 Jesus gives some examples of people with exceptional vision. OFTENTIMES THE LEAST LIKELY PEOPLE WILL UNDERSTAND THE GOSPEL AND RESPOND TO IT WITH FAITH. Again, Jesus continues to rebuke the proud, hard-hearted people who continue to reject His message and His works. As we have studied through the Gospel of Luke we have seen all sorts of signs, wonders, and miracles performed by Jesus. We have seen His offer of salvation and wholeness. His teaching was like no other teaching the people heard before. And in the very presence of a miracle they reject Jesus.

EXCEPTIONAL VISION (VS 31-32)

In verse 31 Jesus reminds them that He is the source of God's wisdom and power. Again, Jesus picks a Gentile person to single out for her exceptional spiritual insight. King Solomon was noted for his wisdom. When he became king, God asked Solomon to request anything and God would do it for him. Here is how Solomon responded:

"6... You were wonderfully kind to my father, David, because he was honest and true and faithful to you. And you have continued this great kindness to him today by giving him a son to succeed him. 70 LORD my God, now you have made me king instead of my father, David, but I am like a little child who

doesn't know his way around. 8And here I am among your own chosen people, a nation so great they are too numerous to count! 9Give me an understanding mind so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great nation of yours" (I Kings 3:6-9 / NLT)?

God was pleased with Solomon's request and gave him incredible wisdom and power to rule the nation. His reputation spread all over the world. Word reached the Queen of Sheba in Ethiopia. She traveled all the way to Jerusalem to meet Solomon and to see for herself if everything that was being said about him was true. She spent some time with him and here is what she concluded:

"6... Everything I heard in my country about your achievements and wisdom is true! 7I didn't believe it until I arrived here and saw it with my own eyes. Truly I had not heard the half of it! Your wisdom and prosperity are far greater than what I was told. 8How happy these people must be! What a privilege for your officials to stand here day after day, listening to your wisdom! 9The LORD your God is great indeed! He delights in you and has placed you on the throne of Israel. Because the LORD loves Israel with an eternal love, he has made you king so you can rule with justice and righteousness" (I Kings 10:6-9 / NLT).

Here is Jesus' point. A queen who came from a country that worships all sorts of idols spent a short time in Solomon's presence and recognized the hand of God at work. Now look at the last phrase in verse 31. Jesus said, "And now one greater than Solomon is here." In other words, Jesus was the source of Solomon's wisdom. Jesus was the source of Solomon's power. The source of Solomon's power and wisdom is standing face to face with the people who recognize Solomon as one of their great forefathers, and yet they can't recognize the supernatural power and wisdom in Jesus. People from all walks of life and from all sorts of religions and philosophies agree that Jesus' teachings stand at the top of all ethical teachings. And if one were to honestly examine the historical evidence for His resurrection would easily see the truth of that event. His power is like no other in all of human history. Jesus is the source of all wisdom and power.

In verse 32 Jesus illustrates the nature of judgment and grace. Here again He will shame and insult those Jewish elite that reject His teaching by unfavorably comparing them to the pagans at Nineveh. Jonah went to this pagan city preaching judgment and repentance. The Ninevites repented and experienced the fullness of God's grace. He did not destroy them. He spared the city.

Jesus came along and demonstrated through His life and teachings that in our natural state, we fall far short of God's standards for living. If we spend time reading through the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, we can easily see how far short we are from God's standards for living. As we examine the life of Jesus, along with His life and His teachings, we can see that we all stand under the condemnation of God's judgment. We should all fall on our knees before God and ask for forgiveness. But many of the people standing before Jesus were religiously proud and arrogant. They did not want to own up to the fact they were deserving

of God's judgment. Jesus made it simple. If people came to Him in faith, He would forgive them of their sins and put them in a right relationship with God.

The pagans in Nineveh were saved through faith and repentance. And they only had a prophet of God. Here the people had God in the flesh and they refused to humble themselves and receive God's wonderful grace.

Listen to how harsh Jesus is with those who refuse to believe. He said that the pagan Queen of Sheba and the people of that great pagan city of Nineveh would rise up on the judgment day and condemn those Jews of the chosen people of God who refused to believe in Jesus. This no doubt would have angered the religious leaders of the Jewish people. I think that often we focus our efforts on good and respectable people because we think they are likely candidates to become Christians because their lifestyles are so close to that of Christians. However, as we have seen in this section, **OFTENTIMES THE LEAST LIKELY PEOPLE WILL UNDERSTAND THE GOSPEL AND RESPOND TO IT WITH FAITH.**

Again it seems to me that we must examine our own hearts to make sure we are humble and truly listening to God and not to our own prideful understanding. Along these lines, Jesus will tell us about the importance of an eye exam. **PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT GUIDED AND ENLIGHTENED BY GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE THE MIRACULOUS NATURE OF EVERYDAY LIFE.** Let me remind us that this illustration is meant to be connected to what Jesus has just said about the nature of faith in everyday life.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EYE EXAM (VS 33-36)

In verse 33 Jesus explains the nature of light. We talked about this earlier in Luke where Jesus used the metaphor of light in chapter 8. He explains it first of all by explaining its negation. In other words, if one hides a light under a bowl it becomes useless. If one hides the light anywhere, it loses its usefulness. Light is meant to be put in a prominent place where it can light up the dark. When light comes into a dark place, its purpose is to illuminate the room. It helps us to avoid dangerous obstacles. If one of its purposes is to prevent us from encountering dangerous obstacles, its equally important purpose is to assist us in finding things that are useful and things we are looking for. Theologically, people wandering around in darkness are in danger and never be able to find those things that give real meaning to life. Only people living in the light are safe and will find all the good things in life. The nature of light is to illuminate by pointing out dangers and pointing out good things to embrace.

Verse 34 takes this illustration and applies it to seeing from the outside in. This is a very practical down to earth, everyday illustration. If someone's eyes are good, then they will easily be able to see those things that are dangerous and those things that are useful. Here is how bad eyesight can affect the whole body. If there were a big hole in the sidewalk, and a person did not see it, stepped into it, fell, and broke their leg, you can easily see how bad eyesight affects the rest of the body. If our eyes are good, then we are relatively safe and can easily navigate our

way. We can get to our destination quickly and safely. I don't think this is so hard to understand. So at this point, Jesus has added having the ability to see joined to the concept of having enough light. If one has sufficient light and good eyesight, she should be able to physically navigate to any destination.

In verse 35 Jesus then describes seeing from the inside out. At this point, He will turn the metaphor to spiritual light. Jesus now goes to the deepest part of human being, our spirits. If our spirits are joined to the light of God's Holy Spirit, we will be able to recognize those things that are dangerous to our whole being. We will also be able to recognize the workings of God and those things that are consistent with His character. The Apostle John refers to this type of lifestyle as "walking in the light."

On the other hand, if our spirits are joined to the world, our lust, sin, and the devil, then we will not recognize those things that are dangerous to our whole being nor will we be able to recognize the workings of God. Even if one were to have enough physical light and have 20/20 physical vision, if their spirits are joined to the world, lust, sin, or the devil, they will be blind and not even be able to interpret the events in the physical world because of the distortion in their souls. On the other hand, someone who is blind, yet has the light of God's Holy Spirit joined to their spirits, they will be able to see all the good things in the world. Here is where Jesus is at this point of his illustration. Things happen in life every moment. God is constantly working and the evil one is constantly working. The way we see and interpret life depends totally on which source is connected to our spirits.

That's why Jesus ends this metaphor by connecting it to the first part of this morning's passage. In verse 36 He states why giving ourselves an eye exam is so important. At the beginning of this passage, Jesus said that the evil generation asks for signs and He ends this illustration by demonstrating that an evil person with evil inner sight can never see and comprehend the signs, teachings, miracles, and the person of God in Jesus. Jesus more than proved over and over again that He indeed was God in the flesh by forgiving sin, healing all sorts of illness, casting out demons, and performing all sorts of miracles, accompanied by teaching that had such authority that people recognized it was above any kind of teaching they had ever heard before. And yet people were demanding a sign right after they witnessed Jesus cast out a demon and give a man speech.

What's the moral of the story for us? It is easy for us to fool ourselves into thinking that we are filled with light, even while being filled with darkness. There will not be much peace accompanying this type of lifestyle.

On the other hand, when our spirits are in direct contact with the Spirit of God, life will make sense and we will experience the peace of God. It takes this type of inner light that will allow us to navigate through the perils and dangers of life, while at the same time allowing us to smell the flowers along the way. **PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT GUIDED AND ENLIGHTENED BY GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE THE MIRACULOUS NATURE OF EVERYDAY LIFE.**

Here are questions that we should ask ourselves. Am I stumbling through life? Does it seem as if I am never able to quite get it right? Can I see real change in my life that leads to more godly behavior and more freedom? Having a healthy and growing faith is where peace, joy, and contentment come from. OUR FUNDAMENTAL FAITH AND CHARACTER INTERPRET ALL WE SEE AND COME IN CONTACT WITH.

Sometimes we think that coming to church insures that we are on the right track. There was a man who lived and traveled with Jesus for three years. In fact he was one of Jesus' inner circle. He saw Jesus perform miracles and heard all His teachings. Listen to how Peter summed up Judas' life:

"16...Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus—17he was one of our number and shared in this ministry."

18(With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. 19Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

20"For," said Peter, "it is written in the book of Psalms,

"May his place be deserted;

let there be no one to dwell in it,'

and,

"May another take his place of leadership." (Acts 1:16-20 / NIV).

It is frightening to think that one of those who lived and worked so closely with Jesus could actually betray Him and hand Him over to the authorities to be publicly humiliated, tortured, and killed. When we allow ourselves to operate in darkness by making up our own religion, we could end up doing the same kind of thing as Judas. Let's make sure the light inside us is truly the light of God's Holy Spirit.