

Luke Chapter 11 v 29 - 32

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning. Welcome. Welcome to all of you. Particularly welcome to folk who are visiting on holiday. And particularly welcome to, I've got a surprise to me, we've got a guest flautist from Canada brought in specially for this morning service.
- So that's lovely. Welcome. And of course welcome to everybody else. We've got several of our folk away for various reasons and I'll share about that later when we pray for them.
- But we're here because we are following on with our forefathers in the faith. We're worshipping the Lord. It's not a new thing to worship the Lord. It's something that God's people have done throughout the centuries and generations and millennia.
- And for that time of worship, Psalm 92 was written particularly. And it says this, It's good. It's good to praise the Lord and make music to your name a most high, proclaiming your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night.
- To the music of a ten-string lyre, possibly a flute, and the melody of the harp. For you make me glad by your deeds, Lord. I sing for joy at what your hands have done.
- [1 : 1 3] How great are your works, Lord. I hope that this morning we're coming with that sense of gladness and of joy. And that sense it's good to praise the Lord.
- And praise him for the great deeds he's done. Particularly, of course, the wonderful deeds he's done through our Lord Jesus Christ. And our first hymn is number 150. Great is the gospel.
- Great is the good news of our glorious God. So let's stand and praise the Lord with all our hearts and minds and soul and strength. 150. We continue in our praises of God as we come to him in prayer.
- Let us pray together. We have to agree, O Lord, with your word and with the psalmist of old by saying it is good to praise the Lord.
- There's nothing better, O Lord, to do not just on a Sunday but any day of the week. To bring you our praise. To bring you our thanks. To bring you our worship. To bring you, O Lord, our love.
- [2 : 2 4] To bring you our joy. And, Lord, we thank you that it is with joy that we come this morning. Each and every one of us who has known and experienced and felt and continues to live day by day in the love of God.
- The grace of God. O Lord, it is such a wonderful thing that nothing in this world comes close to. Nothing in this world touches. Whatever pleasure, whatever joy, whatever delight we find in your creation.
- And we thank you for it. We thank you for the joy of family and friends. We thank you for the joy of a beautiful day and a beautiful scenery. We thank you for the joy, Lord, of health and strength.
- But we know that all these things are but for a temporary moment, a time, a passing. But your love, your grace, and your goodness to us is eternal and everlasting.
- Even death itself cannot remove your love from us. Even death itself cannot prevent you from being our God. From us being able to say, you are mine and we are yours.

[3 : 28] And, O Lord, we thank you again that this morning we come. We come to you, O God. We come not with fear and trembling. We come not with terror. We come not, Lord, because of your wrath.

But we come, O Lord, because of your grace. We come, O Lord, knowing that, again, in the Lord Jesus Christ, all of our sins have been forgiven. All of the anger and the judgment of God against us, which is rightfully deserved, has been removed far from us.

That we are now, Lord, the objects of your love. We are the objects of your mercy and your grace. We are those that you look upon with eyes which are filled with love and delight.

And, O Lord, it's such a wonderful thing to know that we are loved of God. We pray that this morning as we come to worship, as we come to praise, as we come, Lord, also to hear you speak to us through your word.

We pray that, O Lord, we might be, may grasp afresh and again the wonder of who you are. That we may again, O Lord, find ourselves lifted up into the heavenlies, as it were, aware that we are in the presence of the living God.

[4 : 39] What a thing it is. What an awesome thing that we sinful men and women can dwell in and enjoy the presence of the Holy God. And, Lord, this is our desire to be with you and for you to be with us.

And so we pray, Lord, come by your Holy Spirit amongst us. Come, O Lord, and speak. Come and minister. Come and do us good. Come, Lord, and save us if we're still, Lord, ignorant of that grace for ourselves.

Come and strengthen us if we feel weak. Come, O Lord, and convict us. O Lord, if there are sins in our lives that shouldn't be there. Come, O Lord, and humble us where pride has taken its place.

Come, O Lord, and lift us where we are downcast. You are the minister. You are the one whose grace is sufficient for all our needs. We come again and ask that your blessing and help.

In Jesus' name. Amen. True. Because we are fallen creatures in a fallen world. But we have a great God.

[5 : 39] I'd like you to turn with me, please, to Luke 11. As I said to you, we read from Jonah in chapter 3 for a reason. Because we're in the Gospel of Luke. We've been in the Gospel of Luke for several months now.

Going through the wonderful record of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we come now to chapter 11. And we're going to read from verse 27 through to verse 32.

Just a brief passage. And by God's grace and help, we're going to seek to apply it to our own lives. Now, verses 27 and following.

If you have one of the church Bibles, that's page 1043. Luke 11, 27. As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.

He replied, Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it. As the crowds increased, Jesus said, This is a wicked generation.

[6 : 43] It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation.

The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them. She came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom. And now something greater than Solomon is here.

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 something greater than Jonah is here.

Toni Morrison was an African-American novelist who died earlier this week. You may have seen it on the news. She was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature back in 1993.

But her first novel was a novel called *The Bluest Eye*, which she wrote in 1970. And in an interview, she talked about how she came to the idea of writing this book.

[7 : 45] It all stems back from an incident when she was a child at school around about 11 years old. One day she was in an argument with another African-American girl about the existence of God.

Tony said she believed in God and she was certain that he was real. Her school friend was angered. And she said that she had proof that God did not exist.

Tony was intrigued and asked her, what was this proof? To which her friend replied, I've been praying for two years for blue eyes.

There's been quite an upsurge in atheism in the Western world over these last 40 years or so.

Certainly since the Second World War. And this rise in atheism is similarly built upon the idea or the theory of what God has not done.

[8 : 46] And so you'll speak to people saying, I don't believe in God because God hasn't stopped wars. God hasn't stopped famines. God hasn't stopped the suffering in this world.

Therefore, ergo, he cannot exist. But instead of being a proof that God does not exist, the lengths that some militant atheist will go in an attempt to deny God is a proof that he must exist.

Think about it. Why do people get so het up about God if he doesn't exist? Why try so hard to convince other people that he doesn't exist?

Nobody writes books, makes documentaries, puts slogans on the side of London buses to disprove the existence of mermaids or the abominable snowman or even extraterrestrial life on other planets.

Why not? Because most reasonable people, reasonable thinking people know that these things do not exist. The atheist is attempting to convince themselves of something that deep down they know has to be true.

[10 : 01] Even Brian Cox, the celebrity scientist who's always on the telly, admitted recently in a radio interview that he couldn't bring himself to deny the existence of God, that he wasn't an atheist.

There's a clear and obvious reason why men and women refuse to believe in God, and it's how Jesus describes the people here amongst whom he lived.

This is a wicked generation. That's where Jesus explains what he means by that and why he calls them that.

In John chapter 3, he says this, This is the verdict. Light has come into the world, but people love darkness instead of light because their deeds are evil.

Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what they've done has been done in the sight of God.

[11 : 13] Last Sunday morning we looked at this passage from verse 14 to 28, where Jesus was meeting with opposition again from those who were in the crowd, usually as we've seen before from the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day.

They tried to reject Jesus or excuse their rejection of Jesus as God's Messiah by explaining away his miracles as being done by the power of the devil.

Some of them said by Beelzebul, verse 15, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons. There were others as well who dressed up their unbelief by testing him and asking for a sign, verse 16, which is what do we have come to, verse 29, and his words there.

They were saying something like this, We need more proof, we need more evidence, we need you to do some special, miraculous, supernatural thing that we can see and that will absolutely convince us that you really are the Messiah sent from God.

His reply here in verse 29 through to 32 of their request for a sign is a challenge to us all, whether we are believers or unbelievers, whether we are atheists or Christians.

[12 : 36] Look at verse 29, we're told there the crowds are increasing. More and more people are coming, joining with this great movement, as it were, following Jesus as he's on his way to Jerusalem for the last time.

Why were they there? Why was this crowd growing and increasing? Was it because more and more people were recognizing, yes, this is God's Messiah? Was it more and more people who were searching for the truth and the salvation that God gives?

No, clearly not. Jesus' rebuke in verse 29 shows us that the reason they were there was they wanted him to perform a miracle. They wanted to see some other marvelous thing that he'd done, like the healing of the mute man in verse 14, like the other miracles that Jesus had done.

They wanted to be entertained. They wanted to be amazed. They wanted Jesus to do something for them that they could talk about with all their friends.

And if he threw in a free meal as well, all were better. For Jesus says something similar in John chapter 6, verse 26, you're looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves.

[13 : 55] How did you feel? Our society today is probably more than ever built upon entertainment.

Everywhere we go in our daily lives, we encounter things being judged by just how entertaining they are. Once something has stopped entertaining us, we move on to something else that will.

A certain person, a thing, an event, whatever it may be, is valued and judged by, how does it entertain me? How does it make me feel?

As a society, we're in a constant search to discover more entertainment and more entertainers. Entertainers, X Factor, Britain's Got Talent, The Voice, The Voice Kids, everywhere we're looking for entertainers, somebody who will keep us entertained.

It doesn't have to do us good socially or physically or morally or spiritually. It just has to keep our attention long enough to divert us from the worries and troubles of our real lives.

[15 : 12] And if there's a chance for us to win some money as well, even better. If you doubt what I say, just turn on your telly this week and watch almost any TV program.

The tragedy is that like the band who kept on playing to the people as the Titanic sank, we are being entertained to our deaths.

This is why Jesus was unwilling to give the crowds another sign or the sign that they wanted. They still wouldn't have believed in him, even if he did.

Remember, on the cross, as he was dying there, they came and stood before him mocking him. If you come down from the cross, then we'll believe in you. They never would.

They never will. Their need was not for more signs or miracles. Let me ask you this, this morning.

[16 : 22] Are you waiting for a sign from God so that you might trust in him as your Lord and Savior? Are you expecting him to do something to convince you that he is the one that you must put your trust and faith in?

And can I say to you as Christians that you must be very careful of not falling into such a similar sin of testing God for a sign?

Perhaps you're praying about something particularly and in one sense, you are holding God hostage. When God answers this prayer, then I will commit this to him.

Then I will give up this sin. Then I will trust him. Then I will believe him more. See, sadly, dear friends, even as Christians, we can rate God's faithfulness to us or his love for us by whether he gives us what we ask for or does what we want him to.

Our faith rises and falls according to our circumstances. When all is well, that's a sign that God is for us. When trouble comes our way and difficulties and suffering, well, that's a sign that God is no longer for us.

[17 : 42] Such a way of thinking is not only extremely dangerous, it's beyond wrong. It's sinful.

It is thinking wickedly of God that somehow he is like us, unfaithful, fickle. However, though Jesus says he will not give them a sign here, he does say that he will give them a sign, not of the kind that they want, but he says, a sign, the sign of Jonah.

Now, of course, we've all heard of Jonah. We read just a bit, but all of us, whether we know our Bibles well or not, know of Jonah, the rebellious prophet. God called and sent to go to Nineveh. He ran away from God.

But after experiencing life in the belly of a fish for three days, he changed his mind and he obeyed God. And as we read there in chapter three of Jonah, he goes and he begins to preach to the city of Nineveh so that the whole city, from its king down to the youngest child, repented of their sin and was saved.

And Jesus says here, in the same way that Jonah was a sign to Nineveh, so he, the son of man, is a sign to the generation of his day, to the Jewish people of his day.

[19 : 07] What did he mean by that? Well, when we read there from Jonah chapter three, I hope you picked up the reaction of the Ninevites to Jonah's preaching.

Not just the repentance and the action, the sackcloth and the ashes. Those were signs of mourning for sin or mourning for grief. But did you hear how it said the Ninevites believed God?

Firstly, they didn't reject Jonah and call him a madman or a demon-possessed man as people did Jesus.

Neither did they ask for a sign from Jonah to say, well, why should we believe you? Give us some sign to verify that you're a prophet from God. But notice also, they didn't say they believed Jonah.

They believed God. The sign of Jonah was simply this, a man preaching God's words. As Jesus says later in verse 32, the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah.

[20 : 14] The sign that Jesus is sent by God is that he is preaching God's word, God's message. That's the sign. In fact, when we read through the Gospels, we find that it was the preaching of Jesus which had the first great effect upon the people.

It was his words that they were moved by. Right back in Mark chapter 1, as he begins his ministry, as he goes for the first time into the synagogue, we're told, he began to teach.

Verse 21, the people were amazed at his teaching because he taught them as one who had authority. It wasn't his miracles and signs that first gripped them. It was the fact that he was proclaiming and teaching something that they'd never heard before.

It was a sign to them. And it was the words of Jesus, of course, that rattled the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the religious leaders of his day. They never took exception to his miracles except when he did them on the Sabbath.

But they took exception to his words. That's why they hounded him. That's why they sought ever so much to put him to death. John in chapter 10, we're told about how Jesus performed signs and miracles and spoke.

[21 : 28] And then we're told his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him. Jesus said to them, I've shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me? What sign, as it were, are you stoning me for?

Again, they said, we're not stoning you for any good work, but for blasphemy because you and me, a man claimed to be God. Because he'd spoken. Because of what he'd said.

Dear friends, we, like them, in Jesus' day, have no excuse for not believing and obeying Jesus' words.

for not taking them at face value, that they really are the words of God. We can make all sorts of excuses. We can bring all sorts of, we can scour the internet, as it were.

We can look for all sorts of wackos and schemes and thoughts and philosophies that should say to us, well, we shouldn't believe Jesus. But the reality is this, that he has spoken to us and we must. First, ties in, that's why I read from verse 27 and 28.

[22 : 39] Because again, remember, when we read God's word, particularly in Luke and in the Gospels and other places, it's everything is there in God's order. There's a reason why we have that verse 28 leading into verse 29.

Blessed, Jesus said, are those who hear the word of God and obey it. And then he speaks about Jonah as the sign, the one who spoke the word of God and there were men who believed it. Now you do the same. It's a simple example to follow.

The people would not believe God's word spoken by Jesus and so they were not blessed. Remember that these people who Jesus came and ministered amongst the Jewish nation, they were not ignorant Gentiles.

They were not those who never knew anything of God or of his dealings with men and women. That's why he could speak about these two people. They were the descendants of Abraham. They were the descendants of that man and they took great pride in being the descendants of Abraham, that man who heard God say, your children will be as many as the stars in the sky and he believed God and was made righteous or declared righteous by God, by faith in the word of God.

And so that's why Jesus calls on these two examples. These are not two examples of Jewish people who believed God's word but they are examples of two lots of Gentile people. Pagans, the Jews would have thought of them.

[24 : 06] Dogs, the unclean, the people who were the less lower than the lower. They consider themselves so much better than these people but Jesus points to these people and surely if these people believed and heard the word of God and acted upon it then surely they must do too.

First example there in verse 31, the Queen of the South. That's not the football team in Scotland if you were thinking of that. You've all heard it when the results came up at the end on the Saturday match of the day.

Queen of the South, three, Hibernian, four, something like that. No, it's not her. Not them, not that team. She was the Queen of Sheba as she's often called as well, the Queen of Sheba.

Sheba was modern day Yemen, that's the very bottom, the southerly part of the Arabian Peninsula sadly where there is so much terrible killing going on at the moment.

In one King's chapter 10 which they would have all known about, they would have known their Old Testament, many of us know it as well, she travelled over 1500 miles to hear the words of King Solomon. She didn't come to seek miracles or signs, she came for wisdom and for truth.

[25 : 18] She'd heard about Solomon's wisdom, heard about how he explained the things of God and in fact she speaks of the Lord and how wonderful he is in giving such a king for his people.

What does Jesus say? The Queen of the South will rise to the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom and now something greater than Solomon is here.

Notice it doesn't say someone greater than Solomon though that's certainly true, Jesus is the greatest something, greater words than Solomon's, greater wisdom than Solomon's, greater truth than Solomon's.

This woman travelled all that way because she was hungry for truth, thirsting for truth from Solomon and now Jesus says before you, you don't have to go anywhere but on your doorstep here is God's truth and wisdom greater, more wonderful than anything that's ever been heard in this world and yet you still won't believe it.

She's going to stand up before the judgment seat of God. She's going to be a witness against you that you did not believe in me and she's going to say I went all this way for truth and you had it something greater and you rejected it.

[26 : 38] What about the Ninevites? The men of Nineveh will stand, verse 32, up at the judgment with this generation. Condemn it for they repented at the preaching of Jonah. Now something greater than Jonah is here.

Well we know a little bit about the Ninevites from Jonah but we know also that they were the sworn enemies of God's people. They were a great and mighty empire, the Assyrian Empire.

Nineveh was their capital. Their armies spread out and destroyed the northern part of the country of Israel and took the people captive just some time later after Jonah's ministry and they were cruel in the most horrific way and yet though they were wicked and hated by the Jewish people and though they were hated by Jonah that's why he didn't want to go and preach them the gospel or the good news.

He wanted them destroyed even though they were such a wicked people a hard-hearted and evil people when they heard this man this Jonah one man speaking and preaching they believed God they repented they turned and Jesus says something greater than Jonah is here greater preaching a greater salvation not the saving from the destruction which is death but the saving from eternal hell and judgment these people too will stand up on the day of judgment and say we only had Jonah but you had the very words of God in Christ and you still didn't believe dear friends this is so so serious isn't it like the Jews of Jesus' day you have heard the words and read the words of God if you've been in this church for any length of time if you've been and read your Bible if you've been and heard preaching then again and again you've heard the word of God speaking to you the great words of Jesus the great words of God for salvation and you still have not believed in him you still will not accept him you still throw up your excuses if only he'd give me a sign if only he'd prove to me if only he'd do this for me how can you think that somehow on that day of judgment when you stand before God that you will be spared his wrath how can you think that somehow

God will excuse when he has given you every single opportunity to believe on him and to trust in him isn't it better to hear and to act upon his word isn't it better Jesus said blessed are those who hear and obey he's not asking you to give all your money away he's not asking you to go to the ends of the earth he's not asking you to crawl on your hands and knees through a hundred miles of broken glass for many of us that's what we would like him to do if only God you told me that I should go to do this and go to do that to earn my salvation then that would be fine but you're telling me all I've got to do is believe all I've got to do is trust all I've got to do is receive sounds too easy it's not easy but it's simple hear the word of God hear Jesus' sermon the very first words that came from the mouth of the Lord

[30 : 23] Jesus as he began his ministry were the same simple words repent and believe the good news the good news is this that God in his grace and mercy is willing to forgive you all your sins and to give you everlasting life with him he wants you to be with him he wants you to know him and enjoy him but your sin has separated you from him and yet in his mercy and love he sent Jesus to take that sin away to die in your place to suffer what you deserve that you might be fully free and fully pardoned that you might be brought to life everlasting life repent means to change the direction of your life and the way that you're going and you're thinking and to say God you are right and I'm wrong and I thank you that Jesus came to save me and I put my whole trust in him dear friends I urge you don't put this off for another day don't put this off for another week don't put this off for another month or another year don't put this off until something happens when the king heard the words of Jonah immediately he cried out and immediately gave the proclamation you've heard

I plead with you to act I plead with you to trust in the person of Jesus let's pray together thank you God that you've not left us ignorant thank you God that you've not left us in the dark to grope and to find our way to you thank you that you came to us in your son the Lord Jesus Christ you came to us with the words of everlasting life with the words of truth the word those same words that spoke the world into creation of the same words you speak to us that will speak life to our souls I do pray oh Lord that you would help us not to test you that you deliver us Lord from that sin of somehow putting you to the test and saying give me this sign give me this answer to prayer give me this thing that I want or else I won't trust you or I'll doubt you or I'll walk away

Lord set us free we pray that we might trust you thank you that the greatest greatest prophet and the greatest wise man and the greatest king the Lord Jesus Christ has spoken and we've heard his word Lord give us therefore we pray repentance and faith I'm going to pray a prayer now and if you want to pray this prayer as your response to what you've heard this morning then simply pray it sincerely in your heart to God and he will answer you oh Lord are the true God the God who has made me the God who sustains me and gives me all that I need oh Lord I've so long lived my life without you and I ask that oh Lord you would turn me around and that

Lord you would cause me to come to you give me Lord that faith that I might trust in Christ I put my faith in him and not in myself I let go of and give up those sins and those thoughts and those ways which have been such a hindrance to my life and I ask oh Lord that you would forgive me for them and that you would come and dwell in my life from this day forward that I might know you and enjoy you thank you for speaking to me thank you that you love me oh father again we pray that you would cause us to live our lives as those who hear and obey the word of God amen are in