

Mondovi: Our Savior's, Gilmanton & Montana: Salem United Methodist Churches
8.3.2025, 8th Sunday after Pentecost, Rev. Hyuntae Kim, Ph.D.

The Radiant Sign Given to Us,

Luke 11:29–36.

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, today wash us with the water of Your Word, and fill us with the light of Your Word so that no darkness may remain in us. In Your name we pray. Amen.

In today's passage, Jesus said, "This generation is an evil generation." Just before this, He had cast out a demon, but some people said He drove out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons. Others tested Him by demanding a sign from heaven. They did not believe Jesus was the Messiah.

In response to their spiritual condition, Jesus described them like a person from whom an unclean spirit had gone out, but the house was swept clean and left empty—so the spirit returned with seven others more wicked than itself, and the final condition of that person was worse than the first.

The Jews had outwardly kept the law, but their hearts were empty. They measured and bound people within the framework of legalism, yet were like that empty house, now inhabited by the original spirit along with seven others more wicked than itself. In reality, many people today are also infested with demons—much like germs that inhabit a body.

To this evil generation, Jesus said, "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." To understand the sign of Jonah, we need to know Jonah's life. Every event that happened to Jonah was a sign. What does that mean? It means that Christ will fulfill these things for us.

Jonah was a prophet from Galilee—just like Jesus. When Nathanael heard about Jesus, he said, "Can anything good come out of Galilee?" The Pharisees and scribes thought the same. They despised Jonah because he was from Galilee, and because he preached to Nineveh, the enemy of their nation. They despised Jesus for the same reasons—He was from Galilee and, like Jonah, came to bring God's mercy to those outside their religious expectations.

Jonah disobeyed God's command to go to Nineveh and tried to flee to Tarshish instead. That too is a sign. It shows that the Jews of Jesus' day—and we today—are people who naturally resist God and try to run to Tarshish, that is, to go our own way, just like Jonah did.

Jonah turning back from his journey to Tarshish to go to Nineveh is also a sign. It teaches us that when we disobey God, we will inevitably be thrown into the sea. When Jonah thought he was about to die, a great fish rescued him. He spent three days in the belly of that fish, and there he repented. Then God *spoke* to the fish—He spoke to it, isn't that fascinating?—and the

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fish spewed Jonah out. Jonah was then able to minister to the people of Nineveh, having passed through three days of suffering, which was like a death.

Jonah himself is a sign of Christ. Jesus, who came in the flesh before the Jews of His day, fulfilled the sign of Jonah. He had to undergo death on the cross, be buried, and in the span of those three days be transformed into the Christ of the Spirit, so that He might dwell within believers. The Christ in the flesh alone was not sufficient—He could not yet give us the gift of resurrection life. Only the risen Christ, through His work of new creation, could come to us by the Spirit and give us all the gifts of the Father.

Jonah also represents *us*. What does it mean that we are in the sea and the belly of the fish for three days? It means that we must be remade in Christ—the true water and the true fish—through His death and resurrection over the course of those three days.

Nineveh was a city so large that it took three days to walk through it. Yet Jonah only preached for one day, saying, “In forty days, Nineveh will be overthrown.” Why did he preach only one day? Because he was afraid that the people of Nineveh might truly repent and receive God’s blessing. So after one day of preaching, he went outside the city to wait and see what would happen. Here we see another sign in Jonah’s story: though Jonah only preached for one day, the Word spread for two, even three days. Jonah experienced the power of the Word—it is the Word that proclaims the Word. Even though Jonah still had a legalistic heart and wanted to see Nineveh destroyed, the Word of God worked beyond his heart. That too is a sign.

Jonah, who repented in the belly of the fish and was brought back to life, became a sign to the people of Nineveh. His very existence proclaimed a message: if they did not repent, they too would be cast into the sea like Jonah. The people of Nineveh, who were spiritually dead, were thrown into the sea of God’s Word, passed through a time of repentance, and, like Jonah, became signs of new life.

As we pass through the sea of death and resurrection in Christ—the three days—we are transformed from captives of demons into captives of God. In Ephesians 4, we read that Christ took those who had been held captive by the devil and led them up into the heavens, making them captives of God, and then gave them many gifts. Not only that, through those gifts, He has appointed us every believer to one or more of the fivefold ministries—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—so that He might send us into the world as gifts, just as Jonah was a gift to Nineveh.

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We all carry within us a sinful tendency to run to Tarshish. That part of us must enter the belly of the fish—in other words, it must be dealt with in Christ. Do you remember that Jesus said, “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?” (Luke 11:11). The fish here symbolizes faith. The fish we are to ask for is not just the faith we need to survive—it is the great fish or the whale, Christ Himself. In Him, we are recreated and receive life.

That is why Jesus concluded, “How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:13).

In verse 31, Jesus tells us why we must come to Christ. The queen of the South also known as the Queen of Sheba came to hear Solomon’s wise words. Jesus says, *“Something greater than Solomon is here.”* He is urging us to come to Him to receive eternal wisdom.

Though the queen of the South had everything as a queen, she must have felt empty and insecure—never knowing when she might lose it all. What kind of wisdom did she hear from Solomon? The very core of Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, and Proverbs: *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”* In other words, true wisdom is found in the reverent fear of the Lord Jesus, who is present with us now.

How will the queen of the South rise at the judgment and condemn this generation? Perhaps like this: *“How foolish you are. You had Jesus Christ come to you in the flesh. You even held in your hands the Scriptures that contain all the mysteries of Christ—and yet you never came to Him to hear His wisdom. You ignored the One greater than Solomon.”*

The queen of the South represents us. Through Christ, we have become God’s queen, the Bride of Christ.

In verse 32, Jesus says, *“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.”* Christ Himself has come, and yet people still do not listen to His words. Today, Christ is given to us in the form of the Word—through the Scriptures. If we don’t read the Bible and instead live out our faith merely based on our own thoughts, we become like the Pharisees. The word *Pharisee* means “separated.” In the Bible, a Pharisee represents someone who has separated themselves from Christ.

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Starting in verse 33, Jesus gives another prescription to this evil generation: *"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."*

In 2 Samuel 22:29, David sings, *"For you are my lamp, O Lord, and my God lightens my darkness."* And in Zephaniah 1:12, the Lord says, *"I will search Jerusalem with lamps and punish the men who are complacent..."* These Old Testament references point to what the Messiah would ultimately do: light a lamp and go searching for people.

When Jesus mentions putting the lamp "in a cellar," it refers to how the mystery of Christ was hidden in the Old Testament. The "basket" refers to a measuring container—symbolizing the Law, which veiled the light until the appointed time. Now, Christ is no longer hidden. The mystery is revealed. He comes to us not as the letter of the Law, but as the living Word—known, seen, and made manifest more and more.

In verse 34, Jesus says: *"Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light; but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness."* Here, the lamp is Christ. He must become our eyes. The lamp is also the Word of the Lord. We are not to see things, people, or circumstances through fleshly eyes, but through the eyes of the Word. If our spiritual eyes—our eyes toward the Word—are healthy, our whole being will be filled with light. But if our view of the Word is distorted or dull, our whole being will be darkened.

If we treat the Scriptures only as a list of do's and don'ts, they become like raw grain in a basket—uncooked, inedible. But when we approach the Word knowing that the living Christ dwells within it, then the Word is no longer just unprocessed grain. It is already a prepared, living food—nourishing, strengthening, even healing us.

Whatever we face, if we plunge into the sea of the Word and see through the eyes of Scripture, we will begin to discern that this is the moment for God to act. May our fleshly eyes be dimmed and instead, the lamp of Christ—the eyes of the Word—shine brightly in us; and may we not only see the sign of Jonah at work in our lives, but may *we ourselves* become that sign to this generation. Amen.

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, we thank You for recreating us as one new man through Your death on the cross and Your resurrection. How wonderful and grateful we are that You come to dwell in us by Your Spirit and walk with us! Help us to regularly expose our faces to Your Word, so that the lamp in the window of our eyes may shine more brightly. Make us a sign of Jonah, showing that You, Lord Jesus, are alive and at work. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord of life. Amen.