

No Neutral Ground

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 June 2019

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0:00] Luke 11, 14 to 36. Now, he was casting out a demon that was mute.

When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke and the people marveled. But some of them said, He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons.

While others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls.

And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out?

Therefore, they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe.

[1:12] But when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. Whoever is not with me is against me.

And whoever does not gather with me scatters. When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest.

And finding none, it says, I will return to my house from which I came. And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits, more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there.

And the last state of that person is worse than the first. As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed.

But he said, Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it. When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, This generation is an evil generation.

[2:17] It seeks for a sign, but 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.

The Queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them. For she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

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.

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. 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. Therefore, be careful, lest the light in you be darkness. If then, your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.

[3:27] This is God's holy and authoritative word. In an essay written in 1953 entitled, What is an agnostic? The British philosopher Bertrand Russell famously defined this widely used label.

An agnostic, he says, thinks it is impossible to know the truth in matters such as God and the future life with which Christianity and other religions are concerned. Or, if not impossible, at least impossible at the present time.

Are agnostics atheists? No. An atheist, like a Christian, holds that we can know whether or not there is a God. The Christian holds that we can know there is a God.

The atheist, that we can know there is not. The agnostic suspends judgment, saying that there are not sufficient grounds either for affirmation or for denial. To a generation that is leery of

commitment, like ours, this suspension of judgment can appear quite virtuous.

I'm neither a dogmatic atheist or a dogmatic Christian. Both claim more than they can prove, but I am an agnostic. I don't form judgments without conclusive evidence.

[4 : 45] I occupy the middle ground. I'm a neutral, undecided party. But according to our passage today, this is neither wise nor virtuous.

Because when it comes to spiritual matters, there is no neutral ground to stand on. To make no choice is to make a choice.

And to suspend judgment on Jesus and his message is the same, in effect, as rejecting Jesus and his message. And so the main point of this passage that Jesus is getting across to us is that we must repent and believe in Jesus Christ, for there is no neutral ground.

And Luke demonstrates this point with three sets of contrasts in this passage. First is Jesus versus Beelzebul. Second is hearing versus seeking signs.

And third is light versus darkness. And the first contrast between Jesus and Beelzebul is interesting. It says in verse 14, Now Jesus was casting out a demon that was mute.

[5 : 54] When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. The demon is described as mute because it's what the demon causes in the hosts that it occupies. Jesus casts out this demon so that the man can speak again, and the people, it says, marveled, which seems like initially a good reaction, right?

It seems like a positive response. But it turns out that it's just, it's a mere fascination with what Jesus has done without faith. There's no response to him in faith.

And we should heed this warning because marveling at Jesus is insufficient. We must not reduce Jesus and the works that he did and his teachings to a spectacle, a curiosity, an interest.

Jesus is Christ the Lord, and he demands our faith and obedience in response to what he teaches. But this crowd does not respond that way. And instead, we see two different negative responses, which is a warning to us in verses 15 to 16.

But some of them said, this is the first response, he casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, while others, this is the second response, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.

[7 : 09] So two negative responses. The first group responds with a smear campaign, misrepresenting Jesus' miracles as acts of Beelzebul, the prince of demons. Beelzebul probably comes from the name Beelzebul.

Beel, as most of you know, is the name of the chief deity of the Canaanites that dwell the promised land that Israel later occupied.

Zebul, Beel, that means lord. Zebul means high place, or lofty dwelling. So it probably refers to Beel as the lord of the high place, or the lord of the skies, as he was popularly called.

It's conceptually similar to the way Ephesians 2, verse 2 describes Satan as the prince of the power of the air. In the air, occupies this airy realm above the earth.

And here, Beelzebul is just another name for Satan, which we see clearly later in verse 18. So the first group is smearing Jesus' ministry, misrepresenting him, saying that it's the act of Beelzebul.

[8 : 16] The second group responds with skepticism, disbelieving Jesus, and seeking further signs. And Jesus responds to both of these negative responses in turn.

First, he addresses the smear campaign, people who are misrepresenting him, in verses 17 to 26. It says in verse 17 that Jesus knew their thoughts, and whenever this happens, this is now the fourth time we've been told that Jesus kind of perceives someone's thoughts, knows their hearts.

Jesus is about to confront them with something. And again, that happens here in verses 17 to 18.

Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls.

And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. Civil wars destroy nations.

Divorces destroy families. Likewise, the kingdom of Satan, if divided, will crumble and fall. That's the logic. And Satan is not so stupid as to be divided against himself by opposing his own demonic forces.

[9 : 23] His influence is still clear and formidable throughout the world, and so it can't be that he is working against himself. So using this reason, Jesus neutralizes the crowd's slander that he's casting out demons by Beelzebul.

It's illogical. Jesus continues in verse 19, And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. So their own sons, their own, maybe not literal children, but people that come from them, they are casting out demons also.

And we see examples of this, for example, in Acts 19, the sons of Sceva, they are also Jewish itinerant exorcists. And if they are doing these things too, and these Jews, from whom these itinerant Jewish exorcists come from, are accusing Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebul, he's asking them, what about people from your own midst?

What about those people whom you endorse? Your Jewish itinerant exorcists, who do they cast out demons with? Are they too using the power of Beelzebul? So Jesus is saying that exorcists, from their own number, will judge them for their slanderous dismissal of Jesus' ministry.

And then Jesus states what is actually happening in verse 20. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

[10:41] Jesus is casting out demons. It's not an activity of Beelzebul, but it is the activity of God Almighty. And it's the sign that the kingdom of God has come upon them.

The phrase, the finger of God, is an allusion to Exodus, chapter 8, verse 19, where Moses brings various plagues upon the land of Egypt and upon Pharaoh because of his refusal to let God's people, Israelites, go to worship him in freedom rather than being enslaved in Egypt.

The Egyptian court magicians are able to replicate using their tricks or sorcery to replicate Moses' first two plagues of turning the water into blood and then making frogs come up from the land.

So they are able to replicate it. And so the Pharaoh hardens his heart. But when Moses turns the dust of the earth into gnats and plagues humans and animals all throughout Egypt, it says this, that the magicians tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not.

So there were gnats on man and beast. Then the magician said to Pharaoh, Pharaoh, this is the finger of God. But Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he would not listen to them as the Lord had said.

[11:55] So Jesus is making an allusion to this account in multiple levels. First, Jesus is not performing some secret tricks or relying on the spiritual forces of darkness to cast out demons.

Rather, his work is not of the same ilk as even these inferior Jewish itinerant exorcists. Rather, Jesus is casting out demons by the very finger of God.

Yet, like Pharaoh who hardened his heart in spite of this clear demonstration of God's power, these crowds are also hardening their hearts against Jesus.

Then Jesus uses an analogy to explain the situation further in verses 21 to 22. When a strong man fully armed guards his own palace, his goods are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.

So this analogy is taken from the messianic prophecy about the servant of the Lord that's coming in Isaiah 49, 24 to 25, which says, Can the prey be taken from the mighty or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?

[13:02] For thus says the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken and the prey of the tyrant be rescued. For I will contend with those who contend with you and I will save your children.

So this was God's promise. This is what he promised he would do with Jesus, the coming Messiah. And Jesus is saying that this is what is actually happening. Satan is the fully armed strong man who is guarding his own palace.

The word palace can also be translated fortress or a castle. So this is really a military imagery. So Beelzebul, the Lord of the high place, is guarding his high castle.

When the strong man is guarding his castle, he says his goods are safe. But when one stronger than he, and that's Jesus, attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides the spoil.

This is the second time now Jesus is being described as the stronger one. One who is mightier. That's how John the Baptist earlier described him. One who is mightier than I is coming and he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

[14:06] So Jesus is the stronger one. Satan is the strong one in the world but Jesus is stronger still and he is the mightier one who wields not the powers of evil forces, these minions, as Satan does, but with the Holy Spirit.

He comes with the Holy Spirit of the Almighty God. Satan holds sway over this world but he is powerless before Christ the King. This is a wonderful image.

Jesus coming as the conquering king, invading the kingdom of Satan, disarming the prince of demons and despoiling his goods. And the spoils that he takes from the evil one refer to the salvation benefits that Jesus secures for his people, the redemption from spiritual slavery, the salvation benefits, the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, his gifts and eternal life in the kingdom of God.

We are called the inheritance of Christ, the special possession of God in Ephesians 1, 18. And so he comes to claim us, to save us, to despoil Satan and his kingdom.

And as the redeemed people of God then, as people who have now joined him, we get to partake in this ongoing kingdom advance. And that's what Jesus is referring to when he promises Peter and the other apostles in Matthew 16, 18.

[15:29] And I tell you, you are Peter. On this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Christians often read this promise as a promise of protection, as if we're huddled up in this secure bunker somewhere and the forces of hell cannot overcome it because Jesus is this bunker.

But that's not the image that is being conveyed to us because gates are defensive structures. They're not offensive structures. They are built to keep enemies out.

So what's being promised here is not protection from the assault of the enemies, but empowerment to assault the enemies. We are to invade the kingdom of Satan, the realm of the spiritually dead, and to liberate the captives and despoil his goods.

That's what we get to partake in. That's what Christ did for us. We are weak, but Christ is the stronger one. There may be family members, friends, neighbors, and maybe even some of us who may seem so captive to the power of the enemy that our rescue seems hopeless, but we have to remember that we are going actually with the stronger one who is able to disarm and dispossess the strong one.

If some of you are struggling in your fight, in your battle for holiness, I hope this encourages you in your daily spiritual warfare against the enemy because Satan is strong.

[17:03] He is a strong one, and it seems at times like his hold over us may be evident in our besetting sins or in the stubborn unbelief of our loved ones that we pray for, that we share the gospel with.

It may make it seem like his whole sway of, his sway over us is unbreakable, but we have to remember that the stronger one is on our side. Our victory is assured, and it is our destiny to gain more and more ground in the battles until the war is won in fullness because Christ has won the decisive battle on the cross and victory is assured to us.

The demons flee at the mention of the name of Christ, Christ the King, the kingdom of Satan is falling, not because of internal discord, not because of a civil war, but because of an external, overwhelming invasion by Jesus Christ and his church.

That's why earlier in Luke 10, 17 to 18, when his disciples, 72 disciples returned with joy from their mission, saying, Lord, Lord, even the demons are subject to us, subject to us in your name, Jesus replied to them, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Through the ministry of Christ and his followers, Satan falls from his high abode and is dispossessed. In 1 Kings chapter 1, we find the derogatory form of the word Beelzebul.

[18:29] They change it to Beelzebub, which means Lord of the flies. That's where the title of the novel comes from. And so in reality, when with the coming of Jesus, the Lord of the skies is reduced to the Lord of the flies.

That's what Jesus does. And because this is a cosmic battle that is being waged over the entire world, there is no neutral ground.

There are no Switzerland's in this spiritual arena. So Jesus says in verse 23, whoever is not with me is against me.

And whoever does not outgather with me scatters. So the first clause of this verse is using military imagery. And the second clause is using agricultural imagery.

Whoever is not with Jesus, meaning if you're not fighting on Jesus' side, you're on the opposite side. You're against Jesus and allied with Beelzebul. And the second clause says, whoever does not gather with Jesus scatters.

[19:40] The word gather is a term used to refer to the harvesting of crops. Luke used it earlier in chapter 3 verse 17 in the same context where John the Baptist says Jesus is the mightier one.

So his winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn. But the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. So Jesus is doing a gathering work. He is collecting his wheat, his people. And those who belong to him, they gather with him. They participate in his work to gather the wheat into his barn. But those who reject him, the chaff, rather, will be scattered by the wind and consumed by the fire of judgment.

Those who do not join Jesus in gathering the harvest will instead join Satan in scattering the harvest and they will be scattered with it. There is no neutral middle ground.

And Jesus elaborates on this reality in verses 24 to 26. When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest. And finding none, it says, I will return to my house from which I came.

[20 : 44] And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first.

So Jesus uses an illustration of a demoniac to highlight the importance of responding to Jesus' message with faith and obedience. Because when an unclean spirit is cast out of a person, it passes through waterless places.

So a waterless place is an arid place, a wilderness. It's the proverbial abode of evil spirits. They wander like nomads in the wastelands where there is no life, where there is no water.

So Jesus was tempted by the devil earlier in Luke chapter 4 in the wilderness. Likewise, in Luke 8, 29, we saw the garrison demoniac when he was possessed by a demon would be driven to the wilderness.

So that's what we're seeing here, waterless places seeking rest. But as they're roaming through these waterless places seeking rest, they are not satisfied with their nomadic existence in the wilderness.

[21 : 49] They don't find rest that they are seeking. They desire to be housed. So the exorcised demon says, I will return to my house from which I came.

When it returns, the person it used to dwell in is found, is to have a sound mind now, has an ordered life, but still unoccupied. So then it recruits seven other spirits more evil than itself so they could together occupy the person and dwell inside him in a much more permanent way.

So the number seven is a symbol of completeness. So it refers to full occupancy, a total control. And the last state of that person is worse than the first.

We as human beings have been created with the capacity to house spirits. If an evil spirit is cast out of a person, that person does not, and then that person does not put his faith in Jesus and is indwelt by God's spirit, the Holy Spirit, then he is still vulnerable to the return of still more evil spirits.

We were created for the spirit's indwelling, the Holy Spirit's indwelling, because God intends to dwell with us. That's his ultimate goal. The ultimate goal of creation is that we become his dwelling place.

[23 : 14] And if we do not say yes to God, then we are saying yes to the devil. There's no neutral zone. We can't stay unoccupied and uninfluenced by the spiritual realm.

We're either with Christ or against him. This principle is true literally, but it can also be applied more broadly in a figurative sense.

And 2 Peter seems to be doing that. 2 Peter 2, verse 20 to 22. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. what the true proverb says has happened to them.

The dog returns to its own vomit and the soul, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire. If you encounter Christ in some way and come into contact with his representatives, the church, and you experience a measure of deliverance from the sins that made your former life miserable, maybe you overcome addictions to alcohol or opioids, maybe addictions to gambling or pornography, or maybe with the help of the Christian community and some biblical teaching on financial stewardship, you escape the vicious cycle of financial irresponsibility, debt, and poverty.

[25 : 02] Or maybe you overcome anorexia or you escape gang involvement. Whatever it may be, all of these things happen in churches, but if you experience a measure of that deliverance but you

don't persevere and put your faith in Jesus Christ, you try to take the gifts of God whilst leaving the giver of the good gifts behind.

You have left yourself unoccupied and vulnerable and when you fall away from the influence of the evil one, the last state will be worse than the first.

putting off your sins is not enough. You can't do that without also putting on the righteousness of Christ. Our minds and hearts are much like our bellies in the sense that they always need to be filled.

The only way to stop eating junk food is to eat healthy food so you're full and you don't crave junk food because our stomach needs to be filled with something. We need to put it off and we need to put it on.

Our minds are never blank slates and our hearts are never empty vessels. They need to be filled with things and unless they're filled with the treasures of God himself, they will fill up with the trinkets of this world.

[26 : 25] An experience of Jesus is not enough. We must believe in Jesus and obey Jesus. We have to repent and believe in Jesus Christ because there is no neutral ground.

That's the first contrast that Luke sets before us. The choice between Jesus and Beelzebul. The second contrast Luke sets before us is between hearing and seeking signs in verses 27 to 32. Having addressed the slanderers who were smearing his ministry, now he's turning to address the skeptics who were trying to test him, questioning him and asking for a sign. But before he does that, there's a brief intermission that kind of sets up his following teaching.

It says in verse 27, As Jesus said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed.

Among a sea of people who are attributing Jesus' work to the work of Beelzebul and otherwise, other people who are questioning him, there is a faithful woman, one woman who actually believes what Jesus is teaching and she pronounces the blessedness of the mother who bore Jesus, which is an indirect way of praising Jesus himself.

[27 : 38] It's like saying, Hey, I'm so thankful that you were born. You're saying, you're expressing thanks for that person, gratefulness to that person. And what this woman is saying is quite true. In fact, it's confirmed by Luke himself.

In Luke chapter 1, verse 42, Elizabeth said of Mary, mother of Jesus, Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And Mary herself, after learning that she will give birth to the Messiah and conceive Jesus by the Holy Spirit, she said in chapter 1, verse 47 to 48, My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant, for behold, from now on, all generations will call me blessed.

So what this woman is saying is very true. Mary is blessed. The womb that bore Jesus is blessed. But Jesus doesn't want the people listening to him to focus on the blessedness of his blood family. So he responds in verse 28, Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it. This is very similar to what Jesus said earlier in chapter 8.

Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, Your mother and your brothers are standing outside. I desire to see you. But he answered them, My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.

[29 : 07] Again and again throughout the Gospel of Luke, Jesus expresses the priority of the faith family over the blood family. This is not because caring for our family members is unimportant.

Scripture in other places clearly commands that. We're called to honor our father and mother. We're called to care for relatives in 1 Timothy 5.8. But it's because Jesus is responding to the word of God that Jesus repeatedly hammers home.

It's because these people are responding to the word of God that Jesus proclaimed that we are to respond with faith and obedience because that message is so urgent. Jesus doesn't want the crowd to get caught up in the VIP status of his family members.

Oh wow, that's Jesus' mother over there. Wow, that's his brother. These things do not have eternal consequence. How you respond to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Whether you respond in faith and obedience or not to Jesus, that has eternal consequence. So you should be concerned about that instead of being fascinated with this.

[30 : 18] blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it. It is blessed to be the earthly mother of Jesus. Yes, that's true. But it is more blessed to become an adopted child of God

by hearing and keeping the word of God.

Sometimes we can get prideful and give undue weight to our spiritual pedigree. Some of us have had faithful godly parents, even grandparents.

Perhaps some of us are descended from famous spiritual giants of ages past or related to some Christian celebrity. Some of us have great training, theological education.

Having godly parents, having those relations is a blessing and a privilege, of course. But what matters is whether or not we hear the word of God and keep it.

Being related to a godly person does not make us godly. What matters is that we own our faith and obey God ourselves.

[31 : 39] after emphasizing the necessity of hearing and keeping God's word, Jesus continues his teaching in verses 29 to 32. Here his focus is on those others earlier that were questioning him and testing him and seeking a sign from heaven.

He says in verses 29 to 30, this generation is an evil generation. He seeks for a sign but 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.

These people keep in mind just witnessed Jesus heal a mute man by casting out a demon but they are still seeking a sign from heaven. These are great examples to point out whenever people ask for signs like hey if God were to prove himself to me in this way then I would that they still don't believe there is no such proof that would relieve all doubts at some point you must take that step of faith and this betrays these people's doubting hearts they are faithless not because they lack the sign but because of the sinfulness of their hearts their skepticism is not a fair minded skepticism but a biased one it's a settled skepticism that will admit no evidence that forces them to change their position so the crowd skepticism is similar to what we saw with King Herod early in Luke 9 Herod too had heard of Jesus but instead of believing him he sought to see him because he wanted him to perform some sign for him as we see later in Luke 23:8

Romans 10:17 tells us clearly faith comes from hearing and hearing and keeping the word instead of pandering to their presumptuous demands for a sign from heaven and Jesus did throughout his ministry perform signs and wonders and he used that to help people who were genuinely seeking him and wanted to believe in him but he does not pander to indulge the whims of people who have a settled skepticism of faithless generation instead he rebukes them because following God requires faith and humility to take God at his word and submit to and those people who will not believe God on his terms will not obey God on his terms either those who demand some kind of miracle a sign on demand that will remove all doubt show that they're not willing to submit to God in every aspect of their life they will seek to conform

God to their own purposes as even after and to these people Jesus offers no sign except the sign of Jonah in a similar verse in Matthew 12:40 Jesus makes the explicit connection between the sign of Jonah because Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish and Jesus will be three days in the heart of the earth so there the connection is explicit to Jesus death and resurrection but here in the gospel of Luke the focus is different Luke is focusing on a different point with the comparison to Jonah here the point of contact between Jonah and Jesus is not Jesus death and resurrection and Jonah sojourn in the belly of the fish but it's their preaching Jonah preached to the people of Nineveh and he became a sign to them because that fish episode happens earlier before Jonah actually goes to

[35 : 30] Nineveh and likewise Jesus here preaches God's word to this crowd and thereby becomes a sign to them and we are to respond to the word of God the preaching of the word by hearing and keeping the word instead of seeking further signs and this is confirmed by verses 31 and 32 please read with me it says the queen of the south will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and behold something greater than Solomon is here the man 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 so they to hear the wisdom of Solomon and she heard it and she received it likewise the Ninevites when they heard the preaching of

Jonah they received it they repented and Jesus is greater than both Solomon and Jonah and while the pagans the Gentiles of Sheba and Nineveh heard and kept the word of God that they heard that were proclaimed to them these Jews who are supposed to be the chosen people of God are rejecting the word of God proclaimed by the Messiah himself the son of God himself therefore

Jesus says even that queen of Sheba even the men of Nineveh will condemn you on the day of judgment sitting on the fence under the banner of skepticism always seeking more and more signs and evidence is a dangerous place to be because there is no neutral ground we must hear the word of God and do it and then in verses 33 to 36 Luke gives us one last contrast to illustrate the importance of responding to the good news of Jesus in the contrast between light and darkness it says what

Jesus is saying here about lighting a lamp is almost identical to what he said earlier in Luke 8 16 to 18 and that also was in the context of hearing God's word and most of you are probably more familiar with a similar passage in Matthew 5 in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says to his disciples you are the light of the world a city on a hill so in Matthew there the emphasis is on the fact that we as followers of Christ are the light of the world and that we are to let that shine by doing good works in the world but in Luke the emphasis is not on our identity as the light of the world rather it's on the fact that Jesus is the light of the world and he is through his public ministry shining his light on us and so the focus in

Luke is not on us shining it but on Jesus shining his light and our response to our by believing and receiving that light so Matthew emphasizes so we are to believe in the good news of Jesus Christ so that we do the good works for Jesus Christ and Matthew emphasizes the latter doing good works Luke emphasizes the former so Matthew tells us to be the light Luke tells us to see the light and that's the point here because in the narrative of Jesus' birth in Luke chapter 1 Jesus is called the sunrise that visits God's people from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness likewise in Luke chapter 2 verse 32 Jesus says that he will be a light for the revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to God's people Israel so in our passage also Jesus is the lamp the lit lamp that should be placed on a stand so that those who enter may see the light it's the light that divides those in darkness and those in the light

Jesus shining the light Jesus uses that illustration further in verses 34 to 36 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 therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness if then your whole body is full of light having no part dark it will be holy bright as when a lamp with its rays gives you light so receiving light through the eye is a metaphor for receiving Christ's message through faith and believing it in your heart and that's why 2nd Corinthians 4 6 it says God who said let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ the eye stands for the light and the whole body becomes full of light and the word that is translated healthy literally means focused it means it refers to having singleness of purpose so if our spiritual eye is focused it's open and it's determined and it's focused on [41 : 21] Christ then we are able to perceive the light of Christ so that it gives a sight and we're able to see everything and have light in our lives so when you hear the word of God and keep it that's how you become spiritually healthy and radiate the light of Christ it's again either or it's not a both end you either have a functioning eye of eye of the heart and see the light of Christ and receive it or you're blind and you live in darkness if you're not yet a follower of Jesus Christ and you're here with us then I urge you to receive this light of Christ because no sign will be given to you except the sign of Jonah Jonah was a sign to the people of Nineveh of their need to repent of their sins and turn to God and you too have this morning received that same sign in the reading and preaching of God's word so will you turn then from your self focused and oriented life to living a God oriented

God centered life C.S. Lewis the famous Oxford professor and atheist who became a Christian later in life said this I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen not only because I see it but because by it I see everything else when you receive the light of Christ through faith his light illuminates everything else in our lives so that we can exclaim like all believers do I once was blind but now I see you can't wait for a sign to prove to you don't wait to see in order to believe but believe that you might see and this teaching is also a sobering warning to any Christian that is trying to straddle both light and darkness as Colossians 1 13 to 14 says

God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption the forgiveness of sins we were all sinners under the oppression of Satan the tyranny of Beelzebul held in our bondage to sin by the strong one but God sent his son Jesus Christ as our champion he's the stronger one who defeats Beelzebul and he does this by dying on the cross for our sins so that we are freed from the guilt and the penalty of sin

so that the strong one the Beelzebul does not have any claim on us anymore he does not have any legal claim on us to keep us bound because we have been freed from our slavery to sin we were all once ignorant sinners groping in the darkness not knowing our way out seeking something to show us a way but Jesus came as the light to illuminate the eyes of our hearts so that we might see and follow the way that he shines for us there is a decisive break that takes place when we become a Christian between light and darkness you can't keep one foot in the kingdom of Satan and one kingdom one the other foot in the kingdom of God becoming a Christian means we renounce our sinful flesh and selfish pride and a Christian that's why by definition is someone who turns toward Jesus in faith so is there in your life a sin that you are harboring are you willfully disobeying the clear commands of scripture have you resigned yourself to sinful habits a Christian still sins yes but it is never an unrepentant sin a sin that we resign ourselves to no a Christian renounces sin we bring it to the cross daily to Jesus Christ and after each occasion and a

Christian fights for holiness daily then strive to put that sinful flesh to death that's what it means to be a Christian light cannot reside in a room without repelling the darkness 1st John 1 puts it this way this is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you that God is light and in him is no darkness at all if we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness we lie and do not practice the truth but if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin this is why we can confess our sins to one another this is why we can bring our sins to light this is why we can come to Jesus instead of hiding in our shame and cowering we can bring it to Jesus because we know that when we do when we walk in the light our sins are exposed it loses its power

[46 : 40] Christ heals us and his light fills us the blood of Christ washes us away from our sins and it's in doing that in repentance and obedience in repentance and faith in repentance and faith again and again in day to day walk repenting again and believing in Jesus again for the forgiveness of sins that's how we make progress in our walk in our obedience in our sanctification in our day to day experience this might feel really slow just like the way we experience light it seems instantaneous to us right when there's light or when you click on the switch flip on the switch light just comes immediately it seems instantaneous to us because light is so quick but when you slow it way down you can actually see light moving light spreading our life even though it seems like a long time in light of eternity is just the moment we are living in that moment that slow down moment when that light is filling the room it's hard for us sometimes to see it moving but when you look back on your life five years ago even a year ago you see the progress that's been made you see how previously dark spots have been lit that's our life but this is just a moment on the way to eternity when we will be filled for eternity with the fullness of the light of

Christ I hope that gives you hope today in your battle in your walk with Christ please reflect on that truth for a moment and we'll respond together by praying actually you know what I'm going to pray for us now because we have a slightly different plan for this prayer this morning God we pray that you will help us to live with this reality ever present before us that Jesus who is the light of the world has shown into our hearts that we have received him and that we are increasingly more and more becoming his little lights the conduits of his light reflectors of his light and Lord we pray that you will blot out the darkness that lingers that you will light them up in the glory of

Christ that you would daily bring us into greater likeness to this glorious light of Jesus because that's our desire Lord to honor you to become more like you so that in us they may see you come to know you help us in Jesus name we pray amen I go I I