

WEEK 25 DAY 1

Today's Reading: Luke 11:29-32

Jesus often saved His most critical words for religious leaders, such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, but in today's passage, He shared some vital words with a large crowd. Jesus had evidenced His identity as the promised Messiah through teaching and miracles, witnessed by many. Still more people heard about them. Jesus called out the lack of faith among them because they demanded evidence beyond His words. They would never believe His miracles if they did not believe His words. Just a few verses prior, the crowd even witnessed Jesus cast out a demon, and yet the rumor grew that he was a servant of Satan rather than a servant of God (11:14-16).

Jesus referenced two moments from the Old Testament in His rebuke. The first moment was the prophet of Jonah and the call to repentance that he brought before the people of Nineveh: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). This wicked city, destined for destruction by the wrath of God, heard the words of Jonah and turned away from their sinfulness in an act of repentance, and saved their city from physical ruin. Jesus referred to Himself, the Son of Man, as the prophet who called His generation to repentance, which He did repeatedly, beginning with launching His ministry. Secondly, Jesus recalled the account in 1 Kings 10, in which the Queen of Sheba traveled an extreme distance to meet King Solomon and gain wisdom about God. Jesus made it personal for the crowd: If the Queen of Sheba traveled so far to encounter God, and if the wicked city of Nineveh was able to turn from their sin, what excuse do you have to stay in yours?

1. Is there a specific sin you are “staying put in”?

2. What prevents you from turning away from that sin and returning to God?

PRAYER:

God, guide me in a journey of repentance. Amen.

Bonus Reading: Jonah 3, 1 Kings 10

WEEK 25 DAY 2

Today's Reading: Matthew 12:38-42

Today's passage in Matthew 12 parallels our reading in Luke 11, though Matthew provided a little more insight into the context and included additional interpretation regarding the "sign of Jonah." Matthew and Luke do not contradict; their unique accounts work together to provide a fuller picture of the event. For example, Luke tells us that Jesus spoke to the crowds. Matthew included detail that indicated His words were in response to specific religious leaders - the scribes and Pharisees (v. 38). By reading Luke and Matthew together, we gain a stronger and more cohesive picture of the event.

The second significant distinction in Matthew's account is the additional information on Jonah found in verse 40. Jonah and the giant fish is one of the most captivating biblical epics, which is why it is often among the first Bible stories kids learn. In Matthew 12, Jesus ensures we understand Jonah and the fish are more than a children's story. Jonah's being swallowed by the fish foreshadowed salvation in two critical ways. First, Jonah was as good as dead in the belly of the fish for three days - resembling the three days and nights Jesus spent in the grave after His Crucifixion. Secondly, the giant fish proved to be a vessel of salvation for Jonah, because without it, he certainly would have drowned in the sea.

We, like Jonah, are desperately in need of salvation. Just as Jonah ran from God when he was called to Nineveh, so have we run from God. In His incredible grace, God brought salvation to Jonah.

Through the Cross and the empty tomb, he has also brought salvation to us. This sign of salvation is so much greater than that of Jonah (v. 41).

1. How does the sign of Jonah, as explained in verse 40, connect to the call to repentance in verse 41?

2. Reflect on a time you ran from God and how He showed you grace.

PRAYER:

Thank You, Jesus, for Your salvation.

Bonus Reading: Jonah 1

WEEK 25 DAY 3

Today's Reading: Luke 11:33-36

As Jesus continued His discourse with the crowd, He shifted to an illustration not rooted in the Old Testament but in daily living. Throughout the entirety of the Bible, God is associated with light, while evil is with darkness. The words of Jesus, such as His call to repentance in verses 29-32, served as a "light" to a generation of people that dwelled in darkness, fulfilling a prophecy from Isaiah 9:2. Jesus, known as "the true light," was revealed to everyone, but not everyone who saw Him understood Him or believed in Him. Even though the light was on display for all to see and not hidden under a basket (v. 33), darkness persisted in the hearts of many.

In verse 34, Jesus introduced a new but intertwined illustration that made this concept personal to His audience. A person with healthy eyes can see the light and be filled with it, but a person with bad eyes cannot see the light and, therefore, is filled with darkness. Jesus is not criticizing those who are physically blind but those who are spiritually blind and missing out on the truth that comes from the light. Just as when Jesus healed a blind man, and his life and perspective were physically transformed, so, too, is the life and perspective of the person who is living in darkness spiritually transformed when he or she steps into the light.

The idea of being filled with light is to be filled with Jesus. This filling is a wholehearted dedication in which everything we do is for the glory of our Savior. In Ephesians 5:8, the apostle Paul calls us to be "children of light," avoiding the "unfruitful works of darkness" (Ephesians 5:11). When we are "wholly bright," the light of Jesus shines through us to a world full of darkness.

1. What are practical examples of how you can share the light within you this week?

PRAYER:

Father, provide a divine appointment to share the "light" (Gospel) with someone this week.

Bonus Reading: John 1:6-8

WEEK 25 DAY 4

Today's Reading: Matthew 6:19-24

Today's passage is found in the middle of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and is filled with important sayings, illustrations and instructions on various issues relevant to living a life glorifying to God. Verses 22-23 parallel yesterday's passage from Luke, but in Matthew, these verses are sandwiched between two other essential illustrations that provide insight into the lamp metaphor.

The first illustration focuses on the importance of being concerned with what is heavenly rather than earthly. Warren Wiersbe's Commentary on Matthew explains, "It is not wrong to possess things, but it is wrong for things to possess us." Idolatry in any form is wrong because it is the act of placing our hope in something or someone other than our sovereign God. This illustration is aligned with the familiar words of verses 22-23 because the person who lays up treasure on earth is also the person with unhealthy eyes, filled with darkness. The person who lays up treasure in heaven, however, is the person who sees the light and, therefore, is filled with the light.

The illustration found in verse 24 is connected to the treasure illustration by the concern of materialism. The idea is simple: Worshipping God and money is a house divided against itself. They have different interests - one represents light, and one represents dark. Money is not evil in and of itself. multaneously, each other!

Still, allegiance to it inevitably pulls us away from God because God desires something much greater than amassing material wealth or having the resources to cover all of our personal desires, which are very often sinful. God desires us to glorify Him and find rest in His eternal promise.

1. How do you see the desire for material wealth dominate our culture? Has it ever dominated your life?

PRAYER:

God, give me contentment with Your blessings and a mind focused on what is heavenly.

WEEK 25 DAY 5

Today's Reading: Mark 4:21-25

Mark provides a unique but parallel account of Jesus' lamp illustration and includes an additional lesson to the metaphor. Like in Luke, the lamp represents Jesus, and the idea is that though some of Jesus' teachings, and even His identity, were not clear to everyone He spoke to, it was meant to be revealed eventually, not hidden. The plan for the advancement of the light began with the disciples through God's Church. The disciples were individually filled with the light, and they were responsible for sharing this light with others, slowly but surely lighting up the darkness by revealing Jesus to those who were blind.

In this passage, we see how truth is revealed. We must be prepared to receive it with ears ready to hear. The ability of the disciples to share the light depended upon their receiving the light. If their "healthy eyes" (Luke 11:34) became dim, and they began to take in darkness once again, their ability to share the light would be diminished. The same is true for us today. We need to be actively learning and growing, taking in truth and light. Importantly, though, we should not cover the light, but instead we are called to share it with joy. Jesus enlists us in this crucial mission in Matthew 28:18-20. By making disciples of all nations, people of light will appear around the globe, eliminating havens of darkness, and removing the "basket" covering true light (John 1:8).

1. Are you mission-minded in the way you interact with unbelievers, or do you tend to keep your light under a basket?
2. Who can you share your light with this week?

PRAYER:

Father, give me boldness and courage to share
Your light. Continue to reveal biblical truth to me
and equip me to advance the mission of the
Gospel.