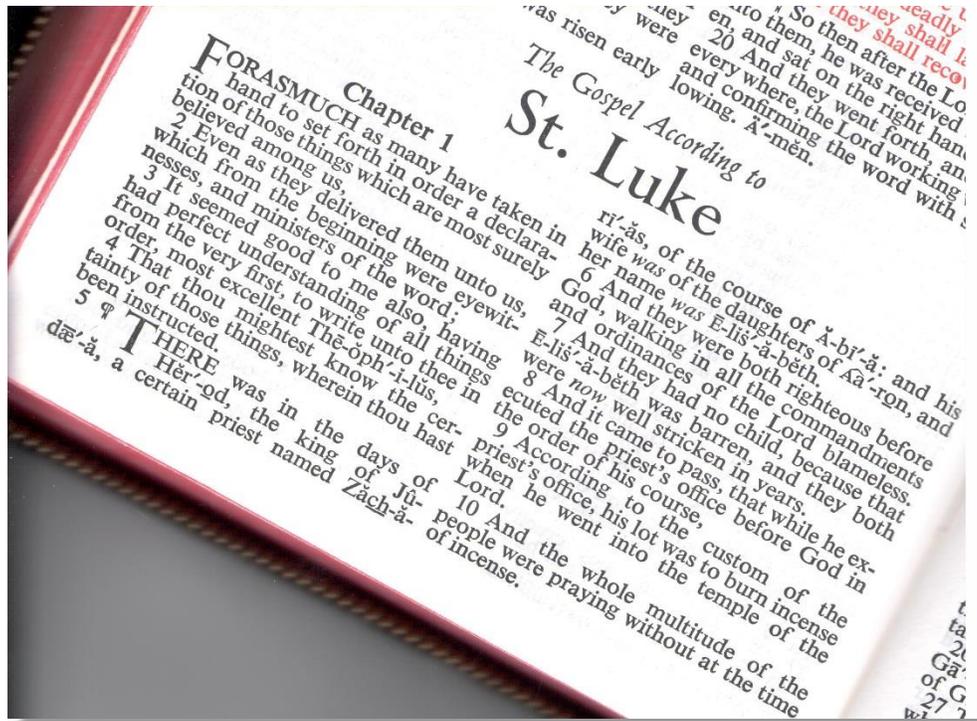


LUKE

JESUS WARNS



F. Michael Slay
A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Luke 11:21-54 – Jesus Warns

Luke 11:21-54 – Jesus warns

Jesus's warns against complacency and looking for signs. But the Pharisees and lawyers get a stronger heads up. They're looking for all the wrong things.

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Thank you.

Luke 11:21-54 – Jesus warns
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1 Luke 11:21-26 (ESV)

“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. 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.”

In the previous passage, Jesus cast out a demon, and then explained how it’s ridiculous to think He could have done this by the power of Beelzebul. Now He paints the casting out as the overpowering of *a strong man, fully armed*, by *one stronger than he*. Jesus doesn’t want anyone to miss the significance of what they just observed. He’s the king of this new kingdom.

Then He presses the issue saying, *“Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”* Jesus is leaving no room for people to be wishy-washy.

But then He says something strangely alarming – that the man who had the demon is now at risk to being repossessed. This passage is unique in that Jesus doesn’t give any details about how to prevent this. He describes it as analogous to leaving a vacant house unguarded but that’s it.

Notice that there’s no hint that the seven other demons are needed to retake the house. The house being clean and unguarded just makes it attractive. The demon *finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes* to its buddies and says something like, “Hey guys, I found a great place for us!”

They need to pay attention to spiritual warfare.

So, what’s the application? Is this analogous to anything in our lives?

You bet it is. The church often pays too little attention to new Christians. We sometimes even “keep score” by counting how many folks make a confession of faith, and leave the rest on auto-pilot. This is a catastrophic mistake. We leave vulnerable houses unguarded.

New Christians must be shepherded. They should be a high priority; they’re definitely a high priority for the enemy. Not only are new Christians vulnerable to external attack, they’ll generate a zillion questions on their own. This is healthy – if someone is there to give them quality answers. Otherwise, they may be tossed to and fro by waves of doctrine and doubt.

Would you leave a newborn infant unguarded?

2 Luke 11:27-32 (ESV)

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. 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.

Here Jesus addresses the folks who weren't convinced when He cast out the mute demon.

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. – Luke 11:15-16

They seek a sign from heaven. Good grief, what do they think the casting out was? Jesus could have said, “You wouldn't know a sign from heaven if it bit you.” This illustrates an important principle – you can't understand something you don't want to understand.

But then Jesus says something really surprising. “*No sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.*” Even by their ridiculous standard (where miracles don't count as signs) one thing will happen that qualifies. They'll get the sign of Jonah. OK, but what's that? Matthew's account fills in the details.

For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. – Matthew 12:40

There were many signs and wonders performed by Jesus and the Apostles, but His resurrection is in a class by itself. It's much more than just evidence of the truth of Jesus' claims. After His crucifixion, when Jesus showed up again and shocked the daylights out of His depressed followers, it was the sign that turned the world upside down. They would go on to serve Him – and walk through fire if need be – for the rest of their lives.

Nothing would ever be the same again.

Is it appropriate to ask for a sign when seeking the Lord's will in something? Absolutely! It's one of the best prayers there is.

But there are some important caveats. Most importantly, God may choose to not give you a sign. His answer may be that you have to make your own decision. You must ask in a way that allows for a non-answer. In fact, getting a sign is pretty special and should involve something out of the ordinary.

A true sign will be thunderously clear.

3 Luke 11:33-36 (ESV)

“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.”

Jesus is still talking about their request for a sign – and their inability to see the signs all around them.

For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. ... 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. – Luke 11:30, 32

In today’s passage, Jesus’ point isn’t about whether or not He’s hiding His lamp under a basket. Of course He’s not doing that.

His point is about their eyes. There’s plenty of light right in front of them, but they’re not letting it in. When *the lamp of your body* isn’t letting any light in, then *your body is full of darkness*.

His audience is familiar with light and dark representing good and evil. They get this. Jesus is claiming to be the light and without His light, they are full of darkness. Then comes the hook.

“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.”

Be careful. There’s danger here.

They’re rejecting the truth and can end up in total darkness.

Two thousand years later we still see people closing their eyes to the truth. The tragedy is all around us. We should pray for our nation early and often.

First, let’s thank God for the way He has blessed our nation in the past. On the back of a one dollar bill is a pyramid. Above it are the words ANNUIT COEPTIS, which is Latin for “He has smiled on our beginnings.” That’s a wonderfully accurate description of what happened.

<http://greatseal.com/mottoes/coeptis.html>

Second, ask Him for help. Frankly, the specifics are a bit tricky here. Great awakenings often come from great pain. Nevertheless, we desperately need a revival.

And that may not come cheap.

4 Luke 11:37-44 (ESV)

While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. And the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.

“But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it.”

The strange priorities of the Pharisees live on today. Many hotels in Israel have a special elevator called a Shabbat elevator, which runs continuously, stopping at every floor. Pushing a button on an elevator closes an electrical circuit and that is “work” according to the teachers of the law. Thus, on the Sabbath (Shabbat in Hebrew) this is prohibited.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabbat_elevator

This is especially ironic because, in physics, work is force-times-distance; it’s the energy expended. Shabbat elevators do a lot of work and waste tons of energy. They also regularly close electrical circuits when opening and closing the doors. From a physics point of view, this all seems crazy.

Typically, these hotels have replaced their incandescent light bulbs with fluorescents to save energy. But then they blow it all on a spectacularly inefficient elevator. They have twisted themselves into pretzels trying to conform to one specific interpretation of the law, while missing the point of “rest” completely. You’d almost think they need an intervention or something.

“Intervention” isn’t a bad description of what Jesus is doing in this passage. At first glance, His behavior seems strikingly rude. Interventions are rude. They are desperate measures designed to save someone from a dire situation.

And the Pharisees are indeed in dire straits.

Every conversion involves an intervention – but it’s the Holy Spirit who does the intervening. All we can do is set the stage. If the Holy Spirit doesn’t open a person’s heart, sharing the gospel with them is like talking to a wall.

And it’s fair to say that this is rude. A person who isn’t interested in the gospel and isn’t interested in changing, is transformed by the Holy Spirit into someone open to the gospel. Sure, it’s a transformation for the better, but so is any successful intervention.

It’s still rude.

5 Luke 11:45-54 (ESV)

One of the lawyers answered him, “Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also.” And he said, “Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,’ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation. Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.”

As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.

Now Jesus turns His attention to the lawyers. This makes sense; the lawyers are the ones who actually invented all those *hard to bear* rules. So, what exactly is wrong with those rules?

They make it so you can't see the forest for the trees.

The rules that God set out in the books of the law were designed to point to God while protecting people from dangers they don't understand, but the lawyers added counter-productive layers to that. Some of their rules almost seem to be designed to annoy people.

What is the greatest commandment? Love God. What do all those rules do to that? They interfere with it.

Imagine that you have a King who everyone loves and everyone is supposed to love. But then this King invents a bunch of burdensome rules, many of which seem purposeless. Would that work for you?

Notice that when Jesus says, “If you love me, obey my commands.” the commands He's referring to aren't anything like the lawyers' rules. Feed the hungry. Heal the sick. Pray in private. Love your neighbor.

How refreshing.

Obviously, some rules are good; society can't function without laws (and people to enforce those laws). Yet rules can lead to legalism, which is Christianity gone off the rails. How do we draw the line?

The key isn't the rules per se, but how they are used. Rules are supposed to be a means to an end – in Christianity that means honoring and obeying God. The rules are guidelines to those ends.

If the rules are obeyed (or enforced!) as if they are what's important, then the true goal is lost. The focus shifts from God to the rules (which are treated like laws).

This destroys worship.

