

Sunday evening October 28th 2018 at CBC

Sermon outline: Reflecting the Saviour - Luke 11:29-36

The words of Jesus that we are considering this evening challenge us about priorities - whether what matters to Him matters to us. There are four issues of priority which we can find in these verses.

[1] OBEDIENCE MATTERS MORE THAN PIETY

There were various responses to what Jesus was saying, and amongst them was the comment recorded in verse 27. But to Jesus, this woman, however well-meaning her comment, was in danger of missing the point of his ministry. One commentator has said this: *“it was a greater honour to the virgin Mary herself to have Christ dwelling in her heart by faith than to have been the mother of Christ, and to have nursed him as a baby.”* [JC Ryle, paraphrased slightly]. That is a very insightful comment.

[2] FAITHFULNESS MATTERS MORE THAN POPULARITY

Luke tells us that the crowds were increasing. It would seem that Jesus was becoming more popular.

The reaction of Jesus to his growing popularity is very striking. He has no interest in it at all. Look at what he says as the crowds increase: “this is a wicked generation.” (And to be clear, that is wicked as in wicked, not wicked as in wonderful.)

Jesus was not interested in popularity, only in being faithful to God’s word. We have seen some increase in our numbers in services of late, and we have seen the challenge largely in terms of how we might accommodate people should the

numbers grow further. It is entirely right to address that issue. We have to be practical.

But we should also recognise that growing numbers can sometimes bring a different challenge – namely the tendency to tone down what we say so as not upset those who are new. It is incumbent on all who speak, and all who listen to those who speak, to make sure that we have the same priority as Jesus evidently had – faithfulness matters more than popularity. Increasing numbers must not make us relax our commitment to being faithful to God’s word.

[3] REPENTANCE MATTERS MORE THAN ASSOCIATION

There were times, as evidenced in these verses, when Jesus found his audiences remarkably unresponsive.

Look back to the driving out of the demon in verse 14. You would think that this remarkable ‘sign’ would remove all doubt as to who Jesus was and would fully support his claims. But notice the response: Some accused him of being demon possessed, others wanted him to do a sign to prove who he was. (What had they just seen, if not a sign?)

So it is not surprising that Jesus went on to draw a sharp contrast between the response of his audiences (hearers) to his words and the responses to God’s word of people in previous generations, in particular those with whom his hearers would have been familiar because their experiences are described in the OT.

It seems that familiarity had, as is often the case, bred contempt. Because they could see Jesus personally and close

up, and because he was, in a certain sense, one of their own, they declined to take him seriously. Perhaps they wanted him as their equal but would not receive him as God's Son. Jesus warned against such an attitude.

[a] In the sight of God rejecting the plainly obvious is a great sin

Jesus pulled no punches with his generation. He tells them they are wicked. Why? Because they do not need to ask for a sign – he has been precisely that amongst them and will continue to be. They knew in their hearts that the Messiah had come. God has graciously spoken to our world in many ways. Those who deliberately reject the obvious testimony to God's existence and character in this world, the supreme example of which is the Lord Jesus Christ, need not expect God to do anything else.

[b] In the sight of God taking privilege for granted leads to great loss

The warning that Jesus gave was stark and direct. He reminded his hearers of the day of judgement. (And if he took the reality of that day seriously, which he obviously did, so should we. Especially when we remember that God has appointed him as the judge on the day.)

The 'great and small' are all judged on that day. And look, here are the people of Nineveh at the time of Jonah. They will rise up on the last day. And then here is one of the great ones – the queen of Sheba. She wasn't an Israelite, she belonged to a pagan nation. She travelled from the Yemen to Jerusalem to investigate the wisdom that God had given Solomon and to listen to him. She was overwhelmed. She will rise up in safety

on the last day. And now here are the contemporaries of Jesus. He lived amongst them, they knew his family, they heard him preach, they saw his miracles. They were amazed at his teaching. Yet what is their fate on the last day? They are condemned.

[4] OBJECTIVITY MATTERS MORE THAN SUBJECTIVITY

What if you think your eyesight is ok when actually it isn't? It is often the case that people do not always realise at first that their sight is not as good as they think it is. It may need others to point it out to them, or they themselves may start to make mistakes which eventually alert them to a problem.

We cannot say, *by our standards of spiritual truth, we accept that the claims of Jesus are true.* (In other words, we judge Jesus by what we think spiritual truth is.) **No, it is because Jesus is the truth that we receive from him the illumination, the true light, that shows us that he is the truth.** We do not sit in judgement on his truth claims. His truth claims sit in judgement on us, as it were. The world has never liked that claim, and never will. Yet many people have come to the point where having believed in Christ they are now able to say, as John Newton, the writer of 'Amazing Grace' famously put it, *'I once was blind, but now I see.'*

May the Lord help all of us to make sure that the light within us is not darkness. May the light of Jesus Christ shine in us and also from us into the lives of those around us. May we truly reflect Jesus Christ in our generation.

To God be the glory, amen.