



I. Introduction

Good morning and Happy New Year! When I was a kid in grade school, my father always used to read the newspaper on weekends and on holidays. One of the papers he often read was the Kansas City Star. Where we lived, it was delivered by car, but in town it was delivered by bicycle. In the paper there was always a column by Bill Vaughan, an author who was known for his sense of humor. Just for fun, I would like to share a couple of quotes from his writings. According to Bill Vaughan:



- “Youth is when you’re allowed to stay up late on New Year’s Eve. Middle age is when you’re forced to.”
- “An optimist stays up until midnight to see the New Year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves.”

It is good to start the New Year with a smile, and I hope that all of us will make the decision to leave the past behind, and look forward to the future with confidence. And, I think the Scriptures encourage us to do this. In his letter to the church in Philippi, Paul wrote about seeking to become perfect, or complete, in Christ. And then in **Philippians 3:13-14**, he said, **“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”**

Paul sets the example of leaving behind the things of the past and looking forward to being home in heaven with Jesus. But Paul also urges us to, “press on.” This year, let’s press on in our walk with Jesus. This year, let’s press on toward the goal of sharing His love with the people of our city. This year, let’s leave behind the things that hinder us and press on in the life of faith, encouraging one another daily.

This morning I want to continue our study in Luke, starting with a brief reminder of where we were last week. Jesus had performed an amazing miracle by casting out a demon from a man who could not speak, but the crowd was not satisfied. Some falsely accused Jesus of being in partnership with the devil. But others, as **Luke 11:16** tells us, **“Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven.”** And, after Jesus had answered their false accusations, a woman praised Jesus by saying that His mother was blessed. But Jesus answered, in **Luke 11:28**, **“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”** In today’s passage Jesus continues to speak concerning these themes. Let’s read Luke 11:29-36.

II. Scripture Luke 11:29-36 (NIV)

[29] As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. [30] For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. [31] The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here. [32] The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. [33] "No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. [34] Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. [35] See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. [36] Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you."

III. Teaching

I think that many of us are familiar with the story of Jonah. The Book



of Jonah tells us about this reluctant prophet. The word of the Lord came to Jonah and God commanded him to go preach to the people of Nineveh. But Jonah ran away and caught a ship headed for Tarshish. It is no surprise that running away from God doesn't work, as Jonah soon found out. The Lord sent a great wind and a storm; and soon the ship was about to capsize. Finally, to save the ship, they had to throw Jonah overboard. And the Lord sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah. Three days later, after Jonah prayed for forgiveness, the Lord caused the fish to throw Jonah onto the shore.

Once again, the Lord commanded Jonah to go and preach at Nineveh, and this time Jonah obeyed. Jonah's message was a simple one, but it had a dramatic effect. **Jonah 3:4-5, "On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth."**

Jesus reminded people of these events and then said, **(Luke 11:32) "The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here."** This was a solemn warning to the people. Nineveh was a wicked and violent city, but when the people of Nineveh were warned of the coming judgment, they repented. The crowds Jesus spoke to in Israel, and especially the Pharisees, would have considered themselves much more righteous than the people of Nineveh, but they were wrong, because they were committing the deadly sin of ignoring the Word of God which Jesus preached and they refused to repent.

Jesus says He will them only the sign of Jonah, **(Luke 11:30), "For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation."** Jesus is speaking, of course, of His death and resurrection. As Jesus explained in **Matthew 12:40, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."** The death and resurrection of Jesus is the greatest sign that was given, as it proves Jesus' victory over sin and death. So we see that in addition to being a historical record of the work of the prophet Jonah, the story of Jonah was a prophetic foreshadowing of the work of Jesus.

You may also remember the story of the Queen of Sheba, also called the Queen of the South. She had heard the stories of Solomon's great wisdom and so she took a long and difficult journey to see for herself whether the reports were true. After seeing his kingdom and speaking with Solomon, the queen was very impressed. But her praise was not for Solomon alone. In **1 Kings 10:9**, she exclaims, **"Praise be to the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the Lord's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king, to maintain justice and righteousness."**

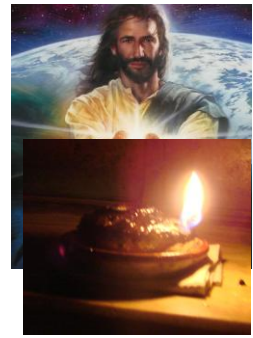


At the preaching of Jonah, the city of Nineveh repented. When confronted with Solomon's wisdom, the Queen of Sheba praised God and recognized God's love. But despite Jesus' wise teaching and His numerous miracles, many in Israel refused to believe. Their hearts were hard and they were stubborn. The Queen of Sheba and the people of Nineveh were gentiles, but they recognized the work of God. And yet, the people of Israel, who had the Scriptures and the prophets, were slow to respond to the truth. Jesus warned them of the danger of refusing to listen again. **Luke 11:31, "The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here."**

Jesus is far greater than Solomon or Jonah; our Lord Jesus is far greater than any earthly king or prophet. Jesus is Lord and God. If we are not willing to listen to Him, then who would we be willing to listen to? I pray that all of us might hear His voice and believe.

In **John 8:12b**, Jesus taught us, **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."** Jesus is the light of the world. It would be impossible to hide such a great light and it would be wrong to try. The light of life and truth is meant to be seen.

Luke 11:33 speaks of how the Light of Jesus should shine forth, and also of how we should shine the light of Christ, reflected in our hearts, into a dark and fallen world. **(Luke 11:33), “No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light.”** A light is meant to be seen. The image is of one of the small oil lamps that were common in Israel in that time. Unlike the electric lights of our time, you could not see the whole room easily. When you came in from outside, you naturally went to the light. In the same way, we should fix our eyes on Jesus and go to Him, because He is the true light, the light of the world.



Luke 11:34-35, “Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness.” These verses teach us several things. First of all, among the Jews, there was an idiomatic expression about good eyes and bad eyes that associated good eyes with generosity and bad eyes with stinginess. The man with good eyes was a wise and generous man, but the stingy man is foolish and is living in spiritual darkness. He has bad eyes. This idiomatic meaning connects these verses to what follows in next week’s passage when we will see how Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their greed.

However, we can also see some other possible meanings here that Jesus may also have intended for us to find. The NIV Bible translates the original Greek as, **“your eyes are good,”** but it can also be translated as, *“when your eyes are clear,”* or even as, *“when your eye is single.”* So we might paraphrase the overall meaning in context by saying that the person of good, clear, and single vision fixes their eyes on the light of Jesus and clearly sees who He is and makes the decision to follow Him, and only Him. The eye is a lamp, not to shine out toward the world, but to bring the light of the world, which is Jesus Christ, into the person’s inner being, filling their heart with the light of Christ.

But if you have believed the lies of the devil, then there is only darkness inside. The Pharisees believed that their legalism brought them closer to God. But they were wrong; their legalistic attitudes led them away from God’s loving heart and into darkness. The light they thought they had within them was actually darkness and deception. Jesus warned them to check their own hearts, **“See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness.”**

IV. Conclusion

As we begin this New Year, we would do well to check our own hearts carefully. Do we have our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus Christ, the Light of the World? Are we listening to His voice, obeying His Word, and walking with Him? This year, let’s draw closer to Him in our hearts and in our daily life. This year, let’s open the eyes of our hearts wide to see Jesus and to let His light in. This year, let’s press on in sharing the Good News of Jesus’ love with those around us. Let’s pray.



V. Closing Prayer