

Friday, March 10, 2023  
Season of Lent  
Day 15

### **Matthew 12:38–45**

<sup>38</sup> Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.”

<sup>39</sup> He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup> 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. <sup>41</sup> 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 something greater than Jonah is here. <sup>42</sup> The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.

<sup>43</sup> “When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.

<sup>44</sup> Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. <sup>45</sup> Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

### **Reflection**

Coming on the heels of Jesus’s discussion of fruit trees and their produce—you can tell good from bad by their fruit—this request for a sign is intentional blindness. Obviously, they are not asking Jesus for more of the same healing and exorcising he’s been doing. They want something BIG! Maybe, stop the sun in its course for a few days, or something like that. Really show us that power. If Jesus has that kind of power, then the leaders will get behind him, because he can obviously achieve their agenda of ejecting Rome and any other bully on the block. This is the Devil’s temptation from the wilderness all over again.

But, like in that desert scene, Jesus knows who he is (and the vocation the Father has called him to) and will not succumb to such temptation to wield worldly power. He says a sign of great power will come, but it won’t come from him. No, the sign will parallel Jonah’s experience: abandoned to death in the belly of the fish until released to ‘new’ life (water as another world/grave). So the Son of Man, Jesus, will be in the earth for only 3 days and nights. The implication is then he too will raise to new life. God will raise his Prophet/Messiah (king) after 3 days of death in the tomb.

Jesus then points to more history: in Jonah’s (Prophet) story, simply because of the message the Ninevites repented. The Queen of the South came to hear Solomon’s godly wisdom (he was a King). The Pharisees and Lawyers are at risk of these pagans standing as witnesses/judges on the final day of judgment (the Jewish picture of the final judgment was a court where Israel is Plaintiff and the Nations are Defendants and God would rule in favour of Israel).

Jesus warns that the current generation of Israel, represented by these leaders, are at risk if they don’t receive him as their Prophet/King. The temple has been rebuilt and cleansed. There have been movements to restore Israel’s holiness. But, says Jesus, if you do not receive me, you are leaving yourself open to greater oppression and impurity than the Israel of history.

How could this possibly speak to you and me today? Well, at its heart, all sin is a fundamental distrust of God. Is God *really* good? So, implicitly and explicitly, we demand Him to prove Himself before we commit to Him. The invitation is to know Him, particularly in Jesus. If we merely use Jesus or religion as a means to clean ourselves up and have a better life, then we are opening ourselves up to greater corruption. The only way to avoid disaster is to submit to Jesus’s Lordship daily; take up our crosses daily and follow him. We must give ourselves to him without condition.

### **Prayer**

Lord, we confess that it can be difficult to trust you. Not because you aren’t visibly good, but because we struggle with a constant level of blindness. Help us to tune out the voice of the devil and listen only to your voice. Come, Spirit of Christ, and dwell in us. Amen.