

Today we have come four short passages of Jesus' teaching: first a warning related to deliverance, then true blessedness, the sign of Jonah, the "greater than examples," and being full of light. There *is* a connecting theme. In the preceding passage, Jesus had cast a demon out of person. The teachers of the law claimed it was through Satan that Jesus had that power. Jesus showed them the absurdity of their claim. Our passages for today begin with Jesus' warning to those who are delivered from demonic possession or oppression.

*<sup>24</sup> "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.' <sup>25</sup> And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. <sup>26</sup> 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."* Luke 11:24-26 Demonic influence in human lives is very real. Jesus had addressed the fact that sons of the teachers of the law were also casting out demons. I think this warning was for them and for the man whose tongue was just set free. Demons can be forced to leave a person. There was some kind of satisfaction in this person's life for these fallen angels. The demons' opportunities come when people seek something other than God to deal with inner pain. People want power from the spiritual realm, and these beings are glad to give it but enslave them in return.

In our day, most people attribute unusual behavior to mental disorder or chemical imbalances in the brain. That can be a cause. Mental health professionals think we are simple minded to think evil spirits can be the cause of insanity. Missionaries in Haiti or Africa can tell you they have no doubt that people become possessed by evil spirits.

I've tried to help in a couple of these cases. Someone asked me to talk to the persons, but in each case, they really did not want to be free. They enjoyed the power and influence of the evil spirit. One of them even confessed that it tormented them. If they permit the demon to stay, it will stay. Even if it was forced to leave it would return.

Jesus was telling the people that if nothing fills up that empty space in our house, which is our mind and soul, if you just try to clean up your act on your own, the demon is glad to return with some of his demon buddies. It doesn't do any good to kick it out if you don't fill the space with light. Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12<sup>i</sup>).

God created a void in us that must be filled. Nature abhors a vacuum and so does the human soul. If we don't let Jesus fill our soul, we'll gravitate to something, money, fame, power, lust, vanity, drugs, or the power of evil; something will fill the space. And if it is spiritual power we seek, the demons are glad to oblige. But with them comes more torment and a higher cost than we ever imagined. The next teachings at first seem disconnected, but they are helping us see how to fill the void in our hearts.

*<sup>27</sup> 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!"* Luke 11:27 Jewish women in the first century prayed to be the mother of the Messiah. This woman was in a roundabout way saying that Jesus is the Messiah. His mother must be a very blessed woman!

The angel who announced to Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah said in Luke 1:28, "*Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!*" Some later manuscripts add, "Blessed art thou among women." You'll see that in the KJV. Since it was not in the earliest manuscripts, newer translations omit it. But Mary did declare that

future generations would call her blessed (Luke 1:48<sup>ii</sup>). Mary was certainly favored of the Lord to give birth to and care for the Messiah. However, the responsibility came at a heavy price as Simeon warned her (Luke 2:34,35<sup>iii</sup>). She would see her son persecuted and crucified.

<sup>28</sup> *But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"* Luke 11:28 Jesus presented an amendment to this cultural thought that His mother must be blessed. The word "rather" may be a mis-translation.<sup>iv</sup> It can also mean, "that is true but..." It is true Mary is blessed, but truly blessed ones are those who hear the word of God and keep it. Mary was blessed, but that concept of the mother of Messiah being blessed fell short of God's generous blessings. **Mary and everyone else are blessed when we hear what God says and preserve the memory of it in our hearts to act according to it.** We see in Luke that she kept the sayings and incidents and pondered them in her heart (Luke 2:19<sup>v</sup>,51<sup>vi</sup>). Her willingness to be God's servant, and her careful listening to God's Word and acting on it were the main reasons she was blessed. This brings us back to Jesus' parable of the foundations. The ones who come to Him and hear His words and do them will not be shaken by the storms of life (Luke 6:47,48<sup>vii</sup>).

In the Old Testament, objects that were dedicated for God's use were called holy. The idea carries over into the New Testament but with a shift of dedicating our bodies for God's use. Now we are the instruments, dedicating our arms, feet, and mouths (Romans 6:13<sup>viii</sup>). But that sanctified use comes from first hearing God's Word and keeping it. What is set apart for God is holy and blessed. That blessing and work of God through us can be our experience if we will hear and do what God has spoken (Psalm 1:1-3<sup>ix</sup>).

We truly hear when we open our Bible and read with receptive hearts. We can hear when we come to a Bible study or a worship service. We can hear in fellowship with believers. And we can hear when the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts. What an honor to be the mother of the Messiah, but the blessing of God is available to everyone who hears the Word of God and keeps it!

Think about that! **You are as blessed as Mary IF you hear the Word and keep it!** We have to be careful not to just let the words land on our ears and go on our way. To hear for the Hebrews (*shema*) is to receive. It's like when we tell our child something and they don't act on it. We say, "Did you hear me?" We know they heard the words, but they weren't acting on what we said. God says, "Did you hear me?" not out of anger but out of disappointment when we don't take hold of His words and receive the blessing from acting on them. He wants us to be blessed. That is why He says, "Hear, O Israel" (Deuteronomy 6:4<sup>x</sup>)! Hear, O Christian (John 8:47<sup>xi</sup>)! Listen to the Word. Be blessed!

<sup>29</sup> *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.*

<sup>30</sup> *For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.* Luke 11:29,30 Jesus knew they were hoping to see miracles and benefit from being around a prophet. In verse 16 they had demanded to see signs. The only sign they will see is the sign of Jonah. In Matthew 12:40<sup>xii</sup> Jesus explained this meant He would rise from death after three days.

Jesus declared that it is an evil generation that seeks signs. Miracles and healings are not for thrills. Nor are they a proof positive of a person's relationship with God. There are some great cons who fool many people. There are false prophets who Jesus said would show great signs (Matthew 24:24<sup>xiii</sup>). We are not to believe them or even go out to

see them. The litmus test is the Word of God. The Word of God along with our personal relationship with the Holy Spirit helps us discern truth. Lots of people know how to stir emotions. Many are gifted with charisma. It all feels so good, but what is the truth? Where is it leading? Does it glorify Jesus and bring honor to God? Does it speak the truth even when it hurts? And even if people see the sign, does it turn them to belief in the one true God? Often in Scripture the miraculous did not help people believe. When signs and wonders are a priority, there is a problem with the heart. What had Jesus just said is the way to blessing? Hear the Word of God and keep it. So how do we hear? First, we need to repent of the hardness of our hearts and hear and do what Jesus is teaching.

Jesus gave us all one great sign, His resurrection after being dead for three days. There were hundreds of witnesses who saw Him alive. He conquered death. Declaring His death for our sins, His burial, and His victory over death is the Gospel, the good news for us all (1 Corinthians 15:3-6<sup>xiv</sup>). Our eternal destiny is changed!

Jesus didn't soften the truth of their unreceptiveness. The Ninevites were brutal. They abused their enemies with torture to instill a psychological fear of their army. But upon hearing of Jonah's three days and nights in a fish belly and the call to repent, they did turn. Jesus was calling the nation of Israel to repent but they wouldn't hear it. Do we hear the Word of God? Will we take the first step to filling the hole in our soul, which is repentance? Will we believe in what He accomplished in His death and resurrection?

*<sup>31</sup> 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.* Luke 9:31 The queen of Sheba, a Gentile, traveled a dangerous two-month long journey from the area of what is today Yemen. She came with gifts to present to Solomon. She had heard of his wisdom and wanted to hear from him herself. That was an enormous undertaking, but her desire for wisdom was so great she determined to make the trip to hear Solomon's wisdom for herself (1 Kings 10:6-9<sup>xv</sup>).

She will condemn that generation, for unlike her, they had signs and Jesus' words and they still would not believe. The signs only make them even more accountable on the day of judgment. She came all that way to hear a man gifted with wisdom, but they wouldn't even hear Wisdom Himself when He was speaking directly to them.

Jesus made one of those statements that are unique to Him. No other person would dare say such a thing. **Something greater than Solomon is here.** Thing? Yes, wisdom is a thing, but it is manifest in the person of Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:2,3<sup>xvi</sup>). He is God's wisdom! Greater wisdom than King Solomon was being voiced day in and day out, yet the people were not receiving it. The revelation of God was being declared and people were closing their ears and refusing to hear. May God help us to hear! This too is about hearing and acting on what we hear.

*<sup>32</sup> 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 9:32 Jesus is comparing the people of Israel to the brutal Gentile Ninevites. Both of Jesus' examples shamed the Jews, for these Gentiles did not have the oracles of God like the Jews did (Romans 9:4<sup>xvii</sup>). That was a stinging rebuke! It reminds us of Jesus preaching in the synagogue in Nazareth when he declared that the Gentiles would be blessed by His ministry, but they would miss out (Luke 4:25-28<sup>xviii</sup>). The people wanted to throw Him off a cliff. Jesus was telling them that even those evil

Gentiles heard and obeyed, repenting at the preaching of the reluctant Jonah, and yet they were not hearing and acting at the word of one greater than Jonah.

Jonah was a prophet of God. To say that **something greater than Jonah was there** is to say a greater prophet was present; in fact, the fulfillment of so many of the words of the prophets was before them, but their ears were closed, and their hearts were harder than Gentiles. That space in their souls was full of this world and traditions so that they could not truly hear the Word as Jesus spoke it (Jeremiah 6:10<sup>xix</sup>).

Matthew adds that to these two “greater than” sayings that **One greater than the temple was present** (Matthew 12:6<sup>xx</sup>). Greater than their greatest king, greater than their prophets, and beyond the service of the Levitical priests is Jesus, our Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14<sup>xxi</sup>). He wasn't boasting. These statements declared the facts. It was a wake-up call. It would weed out some of those following Him for the wrong reasons while inviting others to believe.

Why are you here listening to the words of Jesus? They aren't a self-help lesson. His words aren't meant to make you just feel good. They are to warn us that unless we turn from worldly self-seeking, that these who did turn will ask us why we didn't repent when we had the very words of Jesus. We have the entire New Testament declaration and 2000 years of church history filled with testimonies. The Ninevites turned at much less. Will we close our ears to Wisdom and try to fill the void in our soul with temporal things? Or will we choose the One who is greater than Jonah the prophet, than Solomon the king, and than God's dedicated place of worship with its priests?

Jesus continued His teaching by telling us what to do once we've chosen Jesus to fill the void in our souls. <sup>33</sup> *“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.”* Luke 9:33 As Jesus is the Light of the World (John 9:5<sup>xxii</sup>), so we are to be lights in the world because He is in us (Matthew 5:14<sup>xxiii</sup>). Scripture uses light as a metaphor for truth, revelation, God (1 John 1:5<sup>xxiv</sup>) and for Jesus and the life He gives (John 1:4-5<sup>xxv</sup>). If Jesus, who is the truth and the revelation of God, lives in us, we should never hide Him. Instead we should let others see Him as much as possible. Light dispels darkness. Darkness must flee!

Lamps were made to dispel darkness. We should all be lamps wherever we go, with the Word of God burning brightly in our hearts. Don't extinguish the flame or hide it. Shine! Let the light of Jesus be seen in your words and actions. Enlighten! It means to give light, clarity, to situations. That is what Jesus was constantly doing with His words. That is what we are to let Him do through us. Live with Him as our prophet, priest, and king, and let others see the difference He makes when He fills the void in our hearts.

<sup>34</sup> *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.* Luke 9:34 This sounds strange to us today because we don't understand that a bad eye meant selfishness and a good eye meant generosity in the language of that culture. Connecting it to the previous verses, we can see that one way to let the light of Jesus shine is to be generous by sharing the Word and love of Jesus. The souls of generous people are full of light. Selfish people are full of darkness.

<sup>35</sup> *Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness.* Luke 9:35 Be careful! We are told to not be anxious about anything (Philippians 4:8<sup>xxvi</sup>), but there are things to be careful about, and one of them is being selfish, stingy, or self-centered. That means to be empty, full of darkness, the absence of any light. When we are like that, we stifle the



transformative power of God's Word and are inwardly dark. Our ears may hear, but we do not act on what we hear.

Consider the people who con others out of their finances and you will see darkness. Look in the eyes of the self-centered, those who live just to please themselves, and you will see darkness. Be careful not to be anything like them. Watch out for becoming complacent to the conviction of the Word of God and turn inward and think only of self. When the eye does not let the light of God's Word reveal the truth of our present condition, you will find depression and self-destructive darkness.

*<sup>36</sup> 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.*” Luke 9:36 If your whole being is surrendered to God, your whole being will be full of light. You will noticeably shine and give light wherever you go. The light within you will illumine your way and bless others, drawing them to the Light of life, Christ Jesus. Jesus is the Great Light (Isaiah 9:2<sup>xxvii</sup>). He is seen by the changes He makes in our lives. We should never attempt to hide His truth in us, or His justice and righteousness, by trying to be accepted.

Now let's put these passages together. Jesus had warned the delivered man to fill up the emptiness or he would end up worse off. Then He told us that blessing comes from hearing and obeying the Word of God. Fill that void with the Word. Next, we are to believe in the resurrection, which is that Jesus' sacrifice for us was accepted by God. He paid for our sins and conquered death. Then we should know Jesus is the source of wisdom. Listen to Him. Hear His call to repent. Let Him be our prophet, priest and king. Let Him fill the void in our hearts with His light and turn us from selfishness to His generous life. Are you empty? Here is Jesus' answer to the void in the human heart. Have you been set free from an enslaving sin? Here is what you need to never return to it. And when you are full of His light -SHINE.

Those great prognosticators, the Newsboys sang, “Shine, make 'em wonder what you've got, make them wish that they were not, on the outside looking board. Shine before all men, let them see good works and then, let 'em glorify the Lord. Shine!”

The Apostle John writes: *<sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.* John 15:6-8 (emphasis mine)

## Questions

- 1 Why are humans constantly seeking more?
- 2 What is the warning to a person delivered from demonic power?
- 3 How can we receive the blessing of God?
- 4 What does the Hebrew word 'hear' imply?
- 5 When do we have opportunities to hear?
- 6 What is the first step to hearing?
- 7 What is the great sign to help us believe?
- 8 What three things is Jesus greater than? Implications?
- 9 How can we be full of light?
- 10 What is the connection between these teachings?

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**<sup>i</sup> John 8:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

**<sup>ii</sup> Luke 1:48 (ESV)**

<sup>48</sup> for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

**<sup>iii</sup> Luke 2:34-35 (ESV)**

<sup>34</sup> And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed <sup>35</sup> (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

<sup>iv</sup> The Greek word used in this sentence can mean "on the contrary", but Jesus uses a different word to express that in all other cases.

**<sup>v</sup> Luke 2:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

**<sup>vi</sup> Luke 2:51 (ESV)**

<sup>51</sup> And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

**<sup>vii</sup> Luke 6:47-48 (ESV)**

<sup>47</sup> Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like:

<sup>48</sup> he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.

**<sup>viii</sup> Romans 6:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

**<sup>ix</sup> Psalm 1:1-3 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; <sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

**<sup>x</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

**<sup>xi</sup> John 8:47 (ESV)**

<sup>47</sup> Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

**<sup>xii</sup> Matthew 12:40 (ESV)**

<sup>40</sup> 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.

**<sup>xiii</sup> Matthew 24:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

**<sup>xiv</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3-6 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

**<sup>xv</sup> 1 Kings 10:6-9 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> And she said to the king, "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, <sup>7</sup> but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard. <sup>8</sup> Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! <sup>9</sup> Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness."

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<sup>xvi</sup> **Colossians 2:2-3 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

<sup>xvii</sup> **Romans 9:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

<sup>xviii</sup> **Luke 4:25-28 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, <sup>26</sup> and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. <sup>27</sup> And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." <sup>28</sup> When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.

<sup>xix</sup> **Jeremiah 6:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it.

<sup>xx</sup> **Matthew 12:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.

<sup>xxi</sup> **Hebrews 4:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

<sup>xxii</sup> **John 9:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

<sup>xxiii</sup> **Matthew 5:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

<sup>xxiv</sup> **1 John 1:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

<sup>xxv</sup> **John 1:4-5 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

<sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>xxvi</sup> **Philippians 4:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

<sup>xxvii</sup> **Isaiah 9:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.