

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Second Sunday In Lent, March 16, 2025**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 318, 281:1-2, 279, 278, 45.

Lessons: 2 Chronicles 9:1-12, Acts 13:16-31, Matthew 12:22-37.

Sermon Text: Matthew 12:38-45.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

*“Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish.”* This was God disciplining him for disobedience.

Jesus tells us that he, *“the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”*  
What do these events have in common?

**THE PROPHET JONAH IS A SIGN POINTING TO JESUS**

- 1. The unbelievers wanted one more miraculous sign.**
- 2. Repentant people of Nineveh will condemn the unbelieving Jews.**
- 3. We must continue to fight devils, to fight sin until our death and our resurrection.**

Unbelieving Pharisees were among those who had witnessed a miracle in which Jesus drove out a demon. They accused him of being in league with the devil because he had power to perform miracles. But Jesus makes it clear that the devil, Satan, would not attack one of his own servants.

Then they ask for a sign – a miraculous sign, a miracle.

But all the miracles that Jesus performed didn’t satisfy the Pharisees. Their question suggests that the right kind of sign – from heaven – would be acceptable proof that Jesus really was the Son of God. Were they looking for something more spectacular than the miracles he had already performed? We don’t know exactly what they had in mind, but we can be certain that they would have found an excuse to continue in their unbelief.

Demonstrations of divine power may impress people, but they never bring people to faith. Ten terrible plagues in Egypt didn’t bring Pharaoh to faith. Experiencing God’s power simply hardened his unbelieving heart and his resolve to not let the Israelites go.

The Word of God plainly tells us that *“faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”* (Romans 10:17, NIV84) It is that Word of God that works faith.

Several chapters later Matthew tells us of a similar episode with Pharisees and Sadducees, when they *“tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. He replied, ‘When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’ and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.”* (Matthew 16:1-4, NIV84) Jesus points out that they can interpret earthly signs but they didn’t recognize signs from the Scriptures.

These people, who should have been teachers of God’s Word, seemed to concentrate on things other than God’s Word.

Especially today there is the danger that matters of this world become the most important things in our lives rather than the truths of the Words of God.

In his first words to the unbelieving Pharisees in our text Jesus *“answered, ‘A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign!’”*

Hadn't he just performed a miracle, a "sign"? Hadn't they seen a number of miracles?

Jesus in his omniscience as the Son of God knew he was speaking to people who did not believe in him and would even want to kill him. He doesn't name them but they can surely guess that he is talking about them when he says ***"A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign!"***

They were ***"A wicked and adulterous generation"*** because they had broken their marriage vow with Jehovah, the true God. God had been faithful with the Jews but because they turned away from him, the true God, Isaiah wrote about them as ***"sons of a sorceress, you offspring of adulterers and prostitutes!"*** (Isaiah 57:3, NIV84) You don't have to know much Old Testament history to see how God's chosen people turned away from him again and again, and were unfaithful to him. They were truly ***"A wicked and adulterous generation."*** They were guilty of spiritual adultery, for they were unfaithful to their faithful God. In spite of all the special blessings God had showered upon them as his chosen people, they left the Lord and went after all sorts of other gods. They followed the false gods of their pagan neighbors. They ignored God's laws. They insisted on hundreds of man-made rules as if that would make them acceptable to God. And at the time of Jesus, when the pagan Romans ruled their land, we see that especially the men who were the leaders of the Jews were concerned about their own power and prestige and what they wanted.

When God fulfilled the promises that had been repeated throughout the 4000 years or so of Old Testament history, ever since the Savior was promised to Adam and Eve, and God finally sent the Savior, they now rejected him. They ignored all the things he did that proved him to be the Son of God and the promised Savior, and then they pretended that one more miraculous sign would make a difference.

Jesus told them they would have them one more sign. That was the application of ***"The sign of the prophet Jonah."*** Jesus uses the 3 days in the grave as a sign of what will happen to him with a most glorious resurrection.

Jonah spent 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of a great fish, and then he was vomited, spit up on the shore. This enabled him to go about the task that God had assigned to him, that is, proclaiming God's message of repentance to the people of the heathen city of Nineveh.

Jesus himself would rise from the dead on the third day. In this way, he would show that he had satisfactorily completed the task for which the Father had sent him into this world, namely the redemption of the world.

Both men, Jonah and Jesus were out of sight for 3 days. But there was a difference, and that leads us to Jesus' second point related to the prophet Jonah.

When Jonah went to Nineveh, the people repented. The signs of their repentance were the sackcloth and ashes.

Jesus tells us that the believing Ninevites and the Queen of the South, the Queen of Sheba, who traveled a thousand miles or so to hear the wisdom of Jesus' wise ancestor, Solomon, would condemn that unbelieving generation of Jesus' day. You heard in our Old Testament lesson the history of the Queen of Sheba who came to Solomon and she left after saying ***"Praise be to the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on his throne as king to rule for the Lord your God. Because of the love of your God for Israel and his desire to uphold them forever, he has made you king over them, to maintain justice and righteousness."*** (2 Chronicles 9:8, NIV84)

At the final judgement, Gentile Ninevites will condemn Jesus' Jewish countrymen because of their impenitence and unbelief when the very Son of God, the Savior, was present in their midst. So will the Gentile Queen of Sheba – who came to listen to the wisdom of God from King Solomon

Jesus is greater than both Solomon and Jonah but his own generation rejected the blessedness of hearing and obeying his Word. They failed to follow the example of the people of Nineveh who repented and the example of the Queen of Sheba who traveled a great distance to hear the Word of God from Solomon.

But these people, this wicked generation, who wanted to see more miracles from Jesus repudiated and rejected and despised wisdom from God when Jesus tells them ***"now one greater than Solomon is here."***

The Jews, as God's chosen people since the time of Abraham, had been given every opportunity to believe and to serve God. Jesus wasted no more time now with the Pharisees and Sadducees. He had more important things to do and more fruitful ways to spend his time.

The more you receive from God, the more God expects from you. Those who have greater opportunities and richer blessings have greater responsibilities, and they have greater fault when they fail to appreciate and use their blessings to serve God and their fellow man.

This is not the only time Jesus denounced unbelieving Jews. In a previous chapter, Matthew had written ***“Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”*** (Matthew 11:20–24, NIV84)

And how about you and me? Haven’t most of us had the Word of God taught to us in its truth and purity for most of our lives? Haven’t we learned about what Jesus did for us when we were very young?

Jesus then used the example from his miracle in our Gospel lesson to make the point that just overcoming one demon, one sin isn’t the end. We must continue to fight sin.

Let us beware lest we think we are good enough for heaven and we don’t have to fight against sin in our own lives.

A person imagines that when he has gotten rid of the demon, of one sin, and made himself over without that demon, that he has gotten his life into good order, and now is capable of doing whatever may be necessary to qualify himself for a place in the kingdom of God. But he can’t do it by himself.

That man was not watchful about getting rid of all the demons. He thought he had it made and didn’t have to worry about all the other sins and the influence of sin in his life. They took charge of the man’s life.

If I struggle to overcome one sin and pat myself on the back for being such a good person, another sin and another sin and another sin will soon take its place, and more sins, more evils will populate my life.

That is the way it would be with the wicked generation of which those unbelieving Pharisees were a part. This is also a warning for us.

As Jews they had received God’s gifts of grace and then despised them. They are children of destruction in a twofold sense, by nature and by choice. And their end is damnation.

So Jesus tells them that the Scriptures give them all the signs, all the information they need. In addition, we have the New Testament to guide us into all the truths of the Old Testament and we especially have the pure truth about the forgiveness of sins which Jesus earned and gives freely.

Let us not be like the wicked generation Jesus lived among! Let us learn from the Scriptures and realize that in Jesus we, too, will rise from the dead unto life everlasting.

Amen.