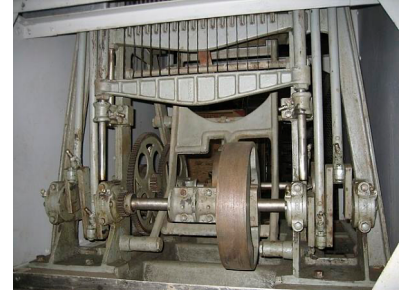


SOMETHING GREATER
LUKE 11:29-36

I'm guessing that most of you don't know the name **Otto Rohwedder**. I'm also guessing that almost all of you have referenced his claim to fame. Rohwedder was an inventor and in the late 1920s he **invented a machine** that began to be used by the [Chillicothe Baking Company](#) in 1928. If his invention had arrived a few years later they would have said it was the best thing invented since sliced bread. Except his invention *was* the bread slicer! He's the man who developed the machine that changed the baking industry, enabling the standardization of other machines like the toaster and making all our lives easier.



Rohwedder is in a long line of people who came up with "something better."

When Jesus was on earth, the people were fascinated by His teaching because He spoke with authority. And they were amazed by His miracles, because, "who can do something like that?" But as is the nature of humanity and our fleshliness, they weren't satisfied with Jesus, His teaching, or His miracles. We know that His teaching and miracles were designed to authenticate His claim to be the Messiah (beginning in His very first teaching, **4:17-21**). But they wanted something more. They wanted *someone* more impressive, and they wanted a greater guarantee of the authenticity of who He was.

So to assert their desired for someone greater than Jesus and something greater than what He did, after Jesus healed a demoniac who made the man he possessed mute (11:14), some in the crowd attributed His work to Satan (**v. 15**), and others said, "give us a sign from Heaven" (v. 16, as if what He had just done wasn't "heavenly"). Jesus responded to the first objection in vv. 17-28 (which we saw last week); He dealt with the second objection in vv. 29-36, which teach us —

DON'T JUST BE AMAZED BY CHRIST. BE TRANSFORMED BY HIS WORD.

This section and the last portions of Luke 11 are about the rejection of Christ. While intrigued by Christ (v. 14b), the crowds are largely opposed to Christ. They don't want Him. They want something more. Listen to what is revealed about Christ and His message, and **learn two lessons** from Jesus' correction of the crowd:

- 1. Don't be a Sign Seeker (vv. 29-32)**
 - What is the sign of Jonah? (vv. 29-30)
 - What is the sign of the Queen of Sheba? (v. 31a)
 - What is "something greater?" (vv. 31b-32)
- 2. Be a Scripture Follower (vv. 33-36)**
 - What does Scripture do? (v. 33)
 - What does Scripture do for you? (vv. 34-36)

1. Don't be a Sign Seeker (vv. 29-32)

- ✓ While Jesus is the Son of Man (Dan. 7:13-14) with all the privileges and authority that come with that position, He was largely unimpressive to the people. Isaiah prophesied that He would appear to be unimpressive (Is. 52:14; 53:2) and the people *were* unimpressed with Him (Is. 53:3; Lk. 4:22ff).
- ✓ Our world remains unimpressed with the Man who was born to poor parents in a minor country, who never penned a book or became an entrepreneur, or had political influence. While His name is known to many, His influence is “minimal” — give us someone better; give us something greater.
- ✓ The world mimics the complaint of Jesus' world and we do well to hear Jesus' authoritative answer: don't be a sign seeker — as if we need more authentication of Jesus or something better than Him.

• What is the sign of Jonah? (vv. 29-30)

- ✓ Jesus always attracted crowds of people. And when He performed miracles, even more people came to Him. Luke had already mentioned the crowd (v. 14) and now Luke emphasizes it — **the crowds were increasing**. This was typical (3:7, 10; 4:42; 5:1, 15...). But it seems that Luke wants us to anticipate that the adulation won't last. Large crowds (like this one) don't mean many conversions. Just because people are interested in Christ doesn't mean they will repent (as today).
- ✓ Jesus then answers the second objection to His healing (v. 15) — “we want a heavenly sign,” probably “something more,” *and* something that isn't satanic (heaven-produced, not Satan-empowered).
- ✓ He has already given them many signs over the previous 2-1/2 years as well as now (vv. 14, 17).
- ✓ It is not always wrong to desire or look for a sign; Jesus had given many (2:12; 7:20ff; Jn. 2:11). The problem with their request is that it came out of moralistic self-righteousness. They weren't interested in following Jesus (v. 28). They wanted to do away with Jesus and supplant Jesus. They wanted to be their own authority and do away with the authority of Jesus. They were skeptics.
- ✓ But Jesus said they would be given another sign — the **sign of Jonah**. Many take that to be a reference to Jonah's three days in the fish as a sign of the resurrection (Mt. 12:39-41).
 - But what was the sign of Jonah that the Ninevites received? They may not have known about the fish (there is no indication Jonah said anything about it). The sign that they received from Jonah was his prophetic declaration of God's message of repentance (Jonah 3:2-5, 10).
 - The sign to Nineveh was the **preaching** of the Word of God, which Jesus emphasizes (Lk. 11:32).
 - Jesus is foreshadowing what Abraham will say to the rich man (16:29-31).
 - The truthful declaration of the Word of God is enough. Christ's Word and God's Word are adequate for all the troubles of all men everywhere. When Christ speaks, it is sufficient (2 Tim. 3).
 - In the same way that Jonah preached (v. 30), **the Son of Man** would be to that generation — Jonah preached judgment and the Son of Man has the authority of judgment (12:40; 18:7-8; 22:69; Dan. 7).
- ✓ It's tempting to want something more — “I just want to be sure about Jesus.”

- But Jesus is the Son of Man and has all authority to judge.
- And He has revealed Himself as the great authority through His Word. What was true in that day is true of us: Christ has spoken; we must hear and we must obey (v. 28).
- We don't need more signs, miracles, prophecy, writings, or scientific data. *Christ has spoken.*

- What is the "sign" of the Queen of Sheba? (v. 31a)

- ✓ While Jesus doesn't call the Queen of Sheba a sign, He treats her story as one.
- ✓ The story is given in 1 Kings 10:1-3ff. Her story is unexpected.
 - She may have been the queen of Ethiopia. Her exact identity is unimportant; what is important is how she responded to the revelation of truth — Solomon's preaching/teaching (1 K 10:9).
 - She had little revelation from God prior to this; she didn't need more signs; Scripture was enough.
 - And like the Ninevites she believed even though she was a Gentile. But *unlike* the Ninevites, she sought out the message of truth and, traveled a long distance, and sacrificed time and resources for it.
 - The Israelites had Christ and His signs come to them; and though Jews and aware of the Messianic promise, weren't interested. Their familiarity with the Scriptures hardened them to submission.
- ✓ Because of her faith, Jesus says that at the resurrection judgment ***she will rise up...and condemn.*** The same thing is said of the Ninevites (v. 32). It does not mean that she and Nineveh will serve as *the* Judge, but that their testimony of faith will ***condemn*** the Israelites of Jesus' day who rejected Christ: "You had the OT revelation and you had the promised Messiah and you rejected, while we had much less and believed."
- ✓ This is a reminder to us that there is an accountability to God for what has been revealed to us. There is a day of accounting coming, as Jesus warned: Jn. 12:44-50.

- What is "something greater?" (vv. 31b-32)

- ✓ At the end of v. 31 Jesus says ***something greater than Solomon is here.*** And He says something similar in v. 32 — ***something greater than Jonah is here.*** What does that mean?
- ✓ Some say it is the person of Christ — *Christ* is greater than Solomon and Jonah. That's true.
- ✓ However, Jesus says ***something***, not "someone." He knows grammar. So what is the greater *thing*?
- ✓ Some say the Holy Spirit or the Kingdom (v. 20). But the easiest thing to say is that when Jesus arrived, He came with a greater *message* than Solomon and Jonah had.
 - He came with the more full revelation of the Messianic plan of redemption (4:17-21). Jesus preached a better gospel than Solomon and Jonah because He fulfilled their anticipation.
 - As the second member of the Trinity, He came with the revelation of the Father (Jn. 1:14).
 - As the Son of Man He came with inherent authority and right to judge.
 - When Jesus says ***something greater***, He doesn't mean a marginal improvement like an iPhone 18 is better than a 17, or even a 4. He doesn't mean better like "new and improved detergent." He means ***greater*** as in a chasm that is infinitely wide; no comparison between Jonah and God.

- And that means that if the Queen of Sheba and the Ninevites believed Solomon and Jonah, then Christ should be believed all the more. There is no comparison between His message and theirs.
- ✓ The skeptics of Jesus' day, in rejecting Jesus, were saying, "we want something more than Your word." There is nothing greater. How do you get a greater message than the infinite Christ's?
- ✓ Do we give lip-service to the Word? Do we value other ideas the same as or more than Christ's? Are we more excited about scientific breakthroughs than Scripture's work on our hearts?
- ✓ What Jesus said in v. 28 is the theme of this entire section: hear and obey. Take it in and follow it.



2. Be a Scripture Follower (vv. 33-36)

• What does Scripture do? (v. 33)

- ✓ On Thursday night, Raye Jeanne and I were watching a movie after dinner when suddenly and simultaneously the TV turned off and the lights went out. And within a minute, neighbors began texting or calling — "did you forget to pay your electric bill, too?" It was quiet. And *dark*. But I am married to someone who is prepared with multiple battery-powered lights that can light up a room quite well, and a large quantity of candles that can provide sufficient light to work.
- ✓ The image of a darkened house or room without artificial light is what Jesus is speaking of in v. 33.
- ✓ When it's night and you are in a dark room, you don't light a lamp and then put it in the root **cellar**. Or you don't immediately put it **under a basket** so the oxygen is removed and the light extinguished.
- ✓ You do what Raye Jeanne did — you put the lamp on a high place, a **lampstand** so that the light is broadcast all around and you can see to operate.
- ✓ That's what the Bible does — it illuminates so we can see. It is a guide that reveals obstacles and pathways and then directs a way to go (8:16; Ps. 119:105).
 - We live in a dark world (Col. 1:13; 1 Pt. 2:9 — the darkness we were called out of still surrounds us and attempts to influence us). Scripture reveals what is dark and black and false.
 - And then it also reveals a correct pathway to travel through the darkness. Only the Scriptures can guide us through the maze of confusion that the world has made of morality and truth.
- ✓ It doesn't take much candlepower to dispel darkness — a 4-watt nightlight is enough. But the light of Scripture is a blazing light that illuminates everything brilliantly. It is super-sufficient.

• What does Scripture do for you? (vv. 34-36)

- ✓ Jesus now personalizes the illustration. In v. 33, there is a principle about light and Scripture. But notice in these verses all the personal pronouns — "Your" and "You" — at least 7x. What is the effect of the Word of God in *your* life? What is it doing in you?
- ✓ **The eye is the lamp of your body** in that it is what lets light into the body. It's what enables us to see. And when the eye is **clear** (healthy, sound, unmixed), our **whole body is** illuminated (everything operates by the light).

- Just like many of us can't see clearly when we remove our glasses, when we are spiritually blind and not submitting to (doing) the Word of God (v. 28), then our lives will be amiss (a mess).
- If our heart is rightly devoted to God, all of our actions will demonstrate "wholeness" (*clear*).
- ✓ Then Jesus warns in **v. 35** — ***watch out that the light in you is not darkness.***
 - I am really thankful for my glasses (I can read!). But a genuine frustration is when I'm doing a house project in a tight place, the spot is invariably poorly lit, I can't get the right spot on my glasses to focus to see, and when I finally find it, the glasses slide off my face. Grrr. But when someone who can see shows up (or I get extra lighting), everything is fine. My problem with my glasses is that while I have light, I'm functionally working in the dark.
 - That's what Jesus is talking about here: there are people (e.g., vv. 15-16) who believe they are living in the light, but because they are not submitting to and obeying the Word of God, they are actually living in darkness. They *don't* have light. They *are* in the dark. (This is the world.)
 - "It is a pitiful situation if the very light is darkness. This happens when the eye of the soul is too diseased to see the light of Christ." [Robertson]
 - And again, remember that the problem isn't with the light; the problem is with the receptivity of the light. It's an eye problem (an inner man problem) — a heart and soul problem.
 - Jesus says, "watch out, beware." Be attentive. Watch your heart. It's a call to self-examination. (This is what should happen every time we read the Scriptures — what is in this Word that needs to change in me? Where am I deficient? What motives have moved away from Christ?)
- ✓ Like the parable of the soils (8:4ff), Jesus is speaking about receptivity to the Word of God. Are you being attentive to the condition of your heart? Are you asking soul questions regularly? Is the light of God's Word penetrating your heart? May I suggest a few questions?
 - Am I a humble learner? Do I acknowledge sinful inclinations and submit and change? Do I intentionally meditate on it so that both my heart and actions are changed?
 - Am I more enticed by the world than I delight in Christ's instruction?
 - Am I calloused by the Word and do I only see how it relates to others and not myself?
 - What do I love and hate? What do those desires reveal about my heart?
 - What do I fear? What do I not want? What do I tend to worry about?
 - Where do I find refuge, safety, comfort, escape, pleasure, security?
 - Whose coming into political power would make everything better?
 - Whom must I please? Whose opinion of me is important? From whom do I desire approval and fear rejection? Whose value system do I measure myself against? Whose love and approval do I need?
 - For what do I pray? What do I talk about the most?
 - Where do I spend most of my time? My money?
 - How am I interacting with my Bible, with what God has revealed to us?
 - Do others see a change in me? What is my spiritual light like (**Mt. 5:16**)?

- ✓ While there is warning throughout this passage, Jesus ends with an exceedingly hopeful note.
- ✓ When our eyes are clear, then our ***whole body is full of light, with no dark part*** (v. 36). God has given light through Christ and His Word; if we hear and obey then it will be obvious in the transformation that takes place in us (v. 28; **Is. 1:22-25**).
 - He has given us all the light we need in His sufficient Word.
 - When we obey, we will be changed and transformed. Even the simplest of us can be changed (Ps. 119:130 — The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.)
 - And we don't need something more than Him and His revelation. It is enough.

CONCLUSION: Our world is not so different than Israel in the first century. We want better bread, better slicers, better cars, better phones, better weather, better politicians, better friends, better marriages and better families, better churches, and a better (more impressive) Savior.

We don't need a better Savior. We have all we need in our Savior and His Word. One commentator said about this passage that it is simply about "the sufficiency of Jesus' word." [Davis] Christ has spoken and that is enough. We don't need more or better revelation from Him. We need better submission and obedience to what He has said. And that is enough for us.