

Life of Christ

A study of the life and teachings of Jesus

Signs or Savior?

Luke 11:29-32

—by Bridget Keylor

I haven't attended many concerts through the course of my life. Crowds aren't my thing, even though I do love music! I love how the right song can set the mood in an instant. The right song can soothe a hurting heart. The right song can speak truth on a level that mere words could never reach. It has been proven that children can learn better when a little rhythm and rhyme are included.

God used songs to remind His people of His power and His goodness; and, He has often used music to speak into my own life at pivotal times. Because music is so powerful in my life, I have learned to guard my heart and discern whether what I am listening to benefits my soul. And, though not many, I have been to a few concerts.

One of my favorites was several years ago. The arena was full. We sat fairly high up, which was ideal for me because I didn't feel smothered by the crowd, and I could see everything from my bird's eye view. The artist took to the stage with scores of musicians and began his medley of singing and rapping all my favorite songs. At one point, as he started one of my absolute favorites, to my surprise, the brass band had somehow snuck up to the rows above us and played their jazzy solos with skill. It was loud but amazing!

It was such a great concert that no one in the arena wanted it to end. The crowd begged for more—encore after encore. The singer obliged for a few songs but eventually told everyone to just go home. Maybe he wasn't big on crowds either. Or perhaps he felt the crowd was just caught up in the show and not focused on the music.

Wherever Jesus went, He drew a crowd. From the time He called His disciples until the time He was arrested, Jesus was in a beautiful rhythm

of healing, gathering a crowd, teaching, and withdrawing from a crowd to pray. Luke 11 shows this beautiful rhythm: He teaches His disciples how to pray, He casts out a demon, He challenges the religious leaders who have gathered to question and judge His actions, and all while the crowds are growing and pressing in closer and closer, asking for more—encore after encore. In the midst of the crowd, Jesus recognizes that what the crowd was caught up in was the “show.” Right in the middle of Luke 11, Jesus stops the music to challenge them.

Surrounded by people, Jesus boldly calls them a wicked generation. He explains that they are looking for signs, but the only sign they will be given is the sign of Jonah. To understand what Jesus is trying to tell them, we need to take it old school—Old Testament, that is—and remember the story of Jonah and Nineveh. Jonah was a prophet God used to deliver messages to people. God would give Jonah a word for a group and would send him to that group to deliver the message. Maybe Jonah had done a great job in the past; we have some evidence of that in 2 Kings 14. But in Jonah 1 verse 1, we find him given an assignment he is reluctant to follow through on. Nineveh.

Nineveh was an evil and wicked city God was sending Jonah to with a message of repentance. If you know the story of Jonah, then you know that Jonah took the long way to Nineveh, but he did finally find himself standing in a crowd telling them to repent, or God would destroy them. Jonah did not perform any miracles. Jonah did not offer any proof that God meant business. Jonah just shared the message. And the Ninevites believed him. They fasted, prayed, and repented. And God saved them.

In Luke 11:30, Jesus explains to this wicked generation that “as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation.” Jesus was standing before them with a message to repent, and they were asking for a sign. Jesus was the sign. Jesus was the Savior. His message was the truth. And they needed to believe to be saved. No show. No encore. Just Jesus.

As I read Luke 11, I was challenged by my own desire for signs. Often, I catch myself asking God for a sign. When I face a big decision, I try to read into everything with a “God, is that You?” posture. Don’t get me wrong: there is nothing wrong with signs and miracles. After Luke 11, Jesus continued to perform miracles. And the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus’ followers and still empowers us to reveal God’s power. But in my need for a sign, I often forget the simplicity of a relationship with Christ.

Jesus says in Revelations 3:20, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in.” No flashy concert. No signs. Just Jesus. If I invite Him in, He is there. If I want to know him, I can read His words and listen to His still small voice. And

when I hear His words, I can do what they say. The crowd that pressed in on Jesus begged for signs when they had an opportunity right in front of them to know the Savior. What are you looking for today? What have you been overlooking in your relationship with Christ?

Question Are you tuning in to the Holy Spirit, paying close attention to his leading?

Prayer Starter “Jesus, Your Word promises in Isaiah 30:21 that we will hear a voice behind us saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’ I invite You to speak to me today and lead me. Help me to discern Your voice above all others, so that I can obey You when I hear You speak.”

Family Chat Today, ask God to show you where He is. He might talk to you in a sunset, through a friend, or while you are going to bed. Tomorrow, share with your family where He was and what He said.

Take Action Invite the Holy Spirit to walk through your day with you; listen closely to the whisper of His direction, and do what He says. We challenge you to memorize Galatians 5:22-23 this week. The voice of God will never contradict the character and nature of God as He has revealed Himself to you in His Word.