

So by ignoring the evidence that God has provided in his word, in the gospel stories about who Jesus is and what he's done, people show themselves to be not serious seekers, but playing a silly game of hide and seek that isn't going to end well with them.

This could be you. And you need to know you're not fooling Jesus. You know, you might be fooling us.

You're not fooling Jesus. He can see right through your smoke screen. He knows your heart. And you need to know you're in serious danger of judgment for refusing to believe what you actually know to be true.

[5 : 16] But for those of us who are Christians, here's a good sign for you, that the problem is with the heart, not in the evidence.

You don't need to feel put out when people claim there isn't enough evidence. The problem isn't the evidence. It's people's hearts that refuse to believe. Our job is just to present the truth about who Jesus is and what he's done.

The good news is you don't need to memorize those crazy numbers like we just saw. All you need to do is use the Bible and talk about who Jesus is and what he did for people.

What he was like, what he's done for you, and what he can do for others if they trust in him. So far, so good.

But what happens if you think you're successful in pulling the wool over God's eyes? Do you actually win at this game of hide and seek? Have you actually disproved God with a wave of your hand and sent him scurrying back into his corner in shame as you disprove the fact that the God of the universe could exist?

[6 : 33] Jesus says actually the opposite. You're going to be the one to face shame and judgment if you win at this game of hide and seek. So what happens if you win in inverted commas?

Well, the consequences for continually seeking God but not responding to the evidence is dire. Friends, God is not mocked.

He knows when people are playing silly games with him. And his judgment is to treat pretend seeking with the contempt it deserves. Just have a look at what Jesus says is going to happen to the Pharisees, to the people of his generation.

Verse 41 and verse 42. He says, 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. He goes on to say, These are stark warnings to the people of Jesus' day.

[7 : 58] They're going to be judged more severely because compared to Jonah and Solomon, Jesus' signs are of a magnitude greater and more compelling than Jonah and Solomon.

As compelling as they were. And therefore, there's more responsibility to have a proper response to Jesus. Just imagine what it would be like on judgment day for the people that Jesus is speaking to.

So on judgment day, typically, the picture in the Bible is that God and Jesus on his throne surrounded by his holy angels and then surrounded by the people who are called to judge.

And then you walk up and the books are opened and you've got to give an account of your life. The Ninevites are going to be called up to testify against the people of Jesus' day.

And they're going to be asked, Hey, Ninevites, welcome to the kingdom. Nice to have you here.

Hey, just tell us quickly, why did you guys repent? Well, there was this dude that was swallowed by a fish.

[9 : 11] And we just thought, well, you know, that's quite a big sign. Oh, did he spend years talking to you? Explaining who God is? No.

He walked in and he said, you better repent. Did he do any other signs? No. That's all we needed. And what did you do? We repented.

Pharisees, scribes. Why did you refuse to believe? Well, there was this guy, Jesus.

Yeah. But he came back from the dead. Oh, yeah. We didn't think it was that important. We didn't believe it.

How could people come back from the dead? It just doesn't happen. Okay. I see. Well, guys, you see that door to your right?

[10 : 14] The one with the fire behind it? You need to go have a little conversation with the people behind that door. Thanks for coming. Not this door. This door is okay.

You're welcome to join us afterwards. Nothing bad is behind that door. I think, friends, what this means for us is that there's going to be no place to hide and no excuses for anyone on Judgment Day, especially for those who play silly games and pretend to look for the truth but deny what they know to be true.

But also, don't think you can be sort of halfway in and halfway out. sort of agreeing with some of the stuff but not all of it. You know, not ready to fully trust Jesus and get baptized.

Many people are like that. They're sort of on the fringes. They think, I don't know if I just do a little bit of this Christian stuff. Maybe that'll be okay. Jesus says, if anything, that person is in even more danger.

Have a look at that next story that Jesus talks about with this unclean spirit that goes out of a person. So, verse 43 to 45. When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest but finds none.

[11:38] Then it says, I'm going to return to my house from which I came. And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it 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. So, also, will it be with this generation.

Jesus is directly speaking to the people in front of him and he's saying that their lives are going to get way worse until there comes this final judgment.

It's very likely that Jesus is referring to the events of AD 70 when the Romans walked in with sick and tired of the Jews rebelling against them. The Roman army walked into Jerusalem and killed everyone they could find.

But the whole of Jewish society got worse and worse before that. There was infighting, there were atrocities, they fought against each other long before the Romans came.

[12:47] Their lives got worse and worse until God's judgment finally fell on them and took them out. Now this kind of thing doesn't just happen in sort of historical settings.

This happens in people's lives as well where they hear some of the truth there's a little bit of change but they're not fully going for it. And what happens is their lives get dramatically worse pretty quickly.

I've seen this first hand with people caught in addiction. They receive some help, get clean for a few weeks but they refuse to go any further with help. Thinking, ah, they've got it, it's all been sorted out. They can go to rest on their own. They inevitably crash and are much worse off than before.

Friends, many people play this kind of game today.

They kind of respond but for whatever reason they go no further with it. They play this sort of in, sort of out kind of game. Coming to church but not kind of, really.

[13:57] Not really being involved, just dipping your toe in. This is not a game that you can win.

This is a deadly game. You're not going to play games with God and come out on top.

He has ways of making you learn some very hard lessons in your life. If you're fortunate enough to learn them, many don't get that chance.

You don't have control over your life as to when you will face judgment. That's up to God, not to you. And so Jesus is saying, don't play that game. Trust me and be changed.

But for the Christian, I want to ask, if Jesus is here talking about signs and he's talking about having clear signs, there are clear signs as to who he is, I want to ask, what kind of a sign are you being to your non-Christian family and friends?

You might be the only sign that they know of that can point them to God and to Jesus. You can't be a half-broken sign covered with the weeds that people can't really see properly.

[15:11] You know, in our community outreaches, we go and clean the signs from graffiti and, you know, you're driving somewhere and if it's covered with stuff that you can't see, you don't know where you're going. don't cover yourself with the weeds of being holier than thou.

Don't push people away. Don't cover yourself with quietness and hide your sign in the corner. You know, it would be stupid to put a road sign up somewhere where no one can see it.

That defeats the purpose. Don't be too quiet or too fearful of speaking up. On judgment day, we're going to have to give an account of how good a sign we have been.

They're going to call people up and say, well, why didn't you turn to Christ? Well, I don't know. I don't really have the signs. There were some signs, but didn't you know any Christians? Dylan,

come here. Did you know this guy?

Yes? Why didn't you speak to him about Jesus? I was scared that he was going to block me on Facebook. Okay.

[16:27] You don't want to stand there wide-eyed, a mouth full of teeth and not giving a good account for being a good sign to others. You might be their only signpost to Jesus.

Make sure you are clean of sin and attractive enough that they want to see what Jesus is all about. But Jesus doesn't only give us warnings as to what will happen if we play at finding him. Those are the threats, those are the judgments coming our way. There, in this passage, he gives us wonderful promises, very good reasons, as to why you want to follow him and to follow the signs and to find him.

So let's look at what you get when you search for and find Jesus. So we're going to look at the blessings of finding Jesus, the blessings of finding Jesus. When you seek after Jesus without playing games, honestly, and with integrity, the promise of God is that you will find him.

We saw that in our verses earlier in the service. And when you do, you're welcomed into this new family with God as your father and Jesus as your brother.

[17:56] And that's a great blessing, but there's another blessing. The thing that makes this possible is the one big sign that Jesus says is of the utmost importance, and that is the sign of Jonah.

You say, okay, now hang on, what's that about? It's the sign of Jesus' death and resurrection. So have a look again at verse 39 and 40. The Pharisees are asking for a sign and Jesus says, nope, you've already got enough signs, but I'm not going to give you the sign you want.

Here's a sign you're going to get. No sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. Now he explains what that means. 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. Now this is the first time that Jesus is talking about his death and his resurrection in the Gospel of Matthew. His death is the three days in the heart of the earth, that's what he's referring to there, and his resurrection, just like Jonah came out of the fish, Jesus is going to come out of the earth. And by the way, isn't that an amazing sign? Jonah is written, oh boy, hundreds of years before Jesus. He didn't, he was just this rebellious prophet.

[19:28] He didn't want to go to the Nunavats. He thought he was doing his own thing and God uses that and he spends three days and three nights in a fish and in hundreds of years later, God uses that exact same sign to point to the Messiah.

Yeah! Where's that slide about a trillion, trillion, trillion chances of a trillion, that's ridiculous. Only God, only a God can make that happen.

Okay. The death and resurrection of Jesus is the big sign that unlocks the central thing that people need to get about Jesus.

His death and resurrection, this is the sign that counts. The other signs are important in the scriptures, the miracles that He does, the teachings that He gives, but it's this sign that if you understand this sign, His death and resurrection, then you get the main thing about who Jesus is and why He came.

And that's because Jesus' death and resurrection is the thing that turns the enemies of God into His friend. It allows people to start to not call Him their judge, but their father.

[20:54] Let's have a look at Romans 4.25. It says this. It's up on the screen. Jesus, He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Notice the link between His death and resurrection. Delivered over to death for our sins, payment for our sins, and raised to life for our justification.

If He wasn't raised to life, you don't get to be justified. Romans 5 says this, Romans 5 verse 10, For if while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more having been reconciled shall we be saved through His life?

Your salvation is dependent on His death, but also His resurrection. You get reconciliation through His death. Now, the point that Paul is making in Romans 5 is that dead people don't do a lot.

Okay, the problem with them being dead is they don't have any power to do anything. Now, get this. Because of who Jesus is, His death is seriously powerful.

[22:17] Now, if His death that normally can't do anything is powerful, how much more powerful is His coming back to life again going to mean for you.

It's an exponentially more powerful thing in your life than His death, if I can put it like that.

Obviously, His death is as important as His resurrection.

But Jesus' resurrection is going to be the big sign that changes everything in world history. If you're going through our daily devotions as we are, through the book of Acts, you'll see this coming out clearly in this very first sermon that we're dealing with.

Even if you don't belong to a growth group, take that little pamphlet and do yourself a favor and go through those daily devotions. Jesus' resurrection is going to be the big sign that changes everything because it is through His resurrection that His death pays for our sins and reconciles us to God, changing God from being our judge to being our loving heavenly Father.

And it turns Jesus from being our accuser to being our advocate. In fact, more than that, it makes Him our brother.

[23 : 32] At the end of Matthew 12 there, Jesus says this question about who is His family comes to see Him. No, come and speak to His family. And He says, Jesus says this, He stretches out His hand towards His disciples.

He makes an emphatic point. Here are my mother and my brothers.

Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother. And if you're a Christian, Jesus, you could have been standing right there.

You're not His blood family. But because of His blood shed for you on the cross and His resurrection, you become more important than His blood family. He could be pointing at you and saying, here's my family.

Here's my brother. Here's my mother. Here's my sister. They're doing the will of their Father. It's Jesus' resurrection that allows His ascension into heaven, which we saw in Acts 1 when we did those devotions.

[24 : 46] It's His ascension to God's right hand that gives us the Holy Spirit and it's the Holy Spirit that gives us the power to live a new life that pleases God and wants to do His will.

Can you see the connection between His resurrection and you doing the will of God? You can't do it unless Jesus was raised again from the dead.

this new life to do the will of the Father, it's this new life powered by the resurrection and by the Holy Spirit.

It's a life of blessing and healing from many things. A life of freedom from law-keeping as we saw last week.

a life of rest and inner peace. In fact, all the blessings that are promised to believers in the New Testament flow from Jesus' resurrection.

[25 : 55] If this is so, it's so surprising that so few people put their full faith, their full trust, in the resurrection of Jesus.

Many Christians, their hope is not placed in the big sign of the resurrection, but they spend way too much time in endlessly seeking after the smaller signs.

Miraculous healings, monetary blessings, always wondering, am I going to be blessed? Am I going to be healthy? Am I going to get this job? Is everything going to be okay in this life?

I've got a friend whose wife died recently. They go to church, sort of, they're sort of in sort of out kind of people, and he's distraught because he just wants one little sign that his wife is okay.

Now, I knew her. She was a Christian. Here's a sign. It's in black and white. If you trust in Christ's resurrection, she's going to be more than okay.

[27 : 12] So, friends, what you need to do, you need to place your faith in the awesome power of the resurrection. Then all these smaller signs become way less important because in the resurrection you get the whole package of God's kingdom blessings.

Just trust Jesus to give them to you in his time. We'll only really get them in their fullness at our resurrection, but of course there's plenty to go around in our lives.

In the meantime, you can rest knowing you've got God as your father, Jesus as your brother, and they will take care of everything you need to see you safely home. After all, if you can trust Jesus with your death, then surely you can trust him with your life.

Let me pray for us. Lord Jesus, you've been raised from death to life and have poured out your Holy Spirit and all your blessings to people who believe in you.

Lord, there's no good reason not to trust in who you are and what you've done and in your resurrection and in your power, Lord. Be merciful.

[28 : 32] Lord, help us to trust you and to live happy lives knowing that we're part of your family and encourage us with those truths. In Jesus' name, Amen.