

Matt 12.38-50 – How will you respond to Jesus and why? Clint Le Page

Main Point – Respond to Jesus by believing the miracle of the resurrection, repenting, and doing God's will from now on, because you're part of his family.

I don't know what miracle you've cried out for in your life?-----

Was it for your baby to stop crying cos you're sleep deprived n' just exhausted?

Was it for a job you need, or lockdown to end?-----

Was it for you or your loved one to be healed of cancer?---

Or a mental illness?-----

Was it for someone you care about to turn to Jesus and be saved?-----

I've asked God for many miracles.-----

And seen God sometimes answer in amazing ways.-----

I've also had people say to me, 'I'd believe in God if he just showed himself to me'.

I'd believe in God if he proved himself with a miracle.-----

It can be a genuine request, and sometimes God graciously answers.----

Often though, people say that when they just refuse to respond to Jesus.

Underneath intellectual doubt there's sometimes a heart that does not want to know the answer.

Sometimes people ask questions about Christianity, and it's just a smokescreen; something to shut you up, or make you look dumb.-----

And there's nothing genuine about the Pharisees request here.-----

I'm finishing Matt 12 today, before Neil covers ch13 over 3 weeks, then we head into 1 Peter, Lord willing.-----

In Matthew 11&12 we've seen most people reject Jesus, and the Pharisees plotting to kill him.

They want him dead cos he healed on the Sabbath, claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath, and they think he's evil.

To say Jesus healed by Satan's power was blasphemous.-----

Jesus has responded saying, They are evil, like bad trees which only produce bad fruit. And their words will result in their condemnation.-----

Now more Jewish teachers n' leaders come to him and say, Teacher we want to see a sign from you.

Our first point of 3 today is, Rely and Respond.----- (SLIDE)

Their request implies they're relying on a miraculous sign to prove Jesus was from God.

But Jesus had just healed the demon-possessed man, **v22** n' made him see and speak.

Jesus had just performed a miraculous sign to give clear evidence of his identity, as the Promised divine King, and they refused to accept that.-----

Jesus has also, healed the man with the shriveled hand right in front of Pharisees.

He's healed the sick, raised the dead and fed over 5,000 people.-----

They are such hypocrites.

Mark and Luke's Gospel's make clear it was really to test him.-----

But Jesus was no circus performer just putting on a show.

All his miracles were about helping people in need.-----

But the Pharisees have already proved they won't believe even when witnessing a miracle from God.----

They say they rely on miracles, but really what's going on is a refusal to believe.----

They don't want the answer.-----

Jesus answers, saying **v39**, they are part of an evil and adulterous generation.

He speaks about them like John the Baptist did back in ch3.-----

They're anti-God, and been unfaithful to God.

So no sign will be given, except the sign of the prophet **Jonah**.-----

This is a bit of a riddle, because Jonah was the sign.

As we heard in the kids talk, he was in the belly of the great fish(**SLIDE**) for 3 days and 3 nights.

And Jesus effectively saying I will be dead for 3 days and 3 nights.-----
 Being in the fish was a metaphor for being dead.-----
 But you might be thinking, Hang on.
 Jesus died Fri afternoon, and he was raised from the dead Sun morning.(SLIDE)
 That's 2 nights not 3.-----
 We think of three 24 hr days.
 But do you know that for Jews then, speaking a day and a night could actually refer to any part of a day.
 The part counts for the whole.-----
 So part of Friday, or part of Sunday still counts for the whole day.
 In **Matt 16.21** Jesus says he will rise on the 3rd day, and we get that.
 But we just need to understand he's saying the same thing here.-----
 And this is the first reference to his coming death and resurrection.
 And it's huge.
 His supreme sign, and the only sign the Jewish leaders are gonna get is, Jesus' death and resurrection.-----
 I mentioned at the start that some people ask God to prove he's real, or give them a miracle, to believe in him.
 Some people rely on miracles.
 But Jesus says here, his resurrection, his coming back from the dead, never to die again, that's the ultimate miracle.-----
 God he can still work miracles today.
 But he wants people to believe in Jesus based on the truth of his resurrection from the dead on the 3rd day.
 When you cry out for a miracle, remember the resurrection.-----
 To often we want Christ to dance to our tune, and produce miraculous answers to our prayers. Like he's a divine slot machine.
 But Jesus isn't there to give us what we want. We are to give him what he asks for.
 That's our allegiance, our lives, our obedience.-----
 If you're looking to miracles to have confidence Jesus really is Lord, I encourage you to read the final chapters of Matthew's Gospel.
 See that eye-witnesses confirm he did die and he rise to life again, so we can too.----
 Pray for eyes to see how miraculous that is.
 Accept the evidence, rely on the testimony of the Bible, and believe.-----
 And when you friend asks for a miracle, could you ask if they would read a Gospel with you?
 And pray they discover Jesus there, his goodness, power, and why he died and rose again.
 Point them to the once crucified and now risen and living Jesus.-----
 Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.-----

But the Jews had refused to turn to Jesus and respond by trusting in him.
 They'd refused to repent.
 Remember that's turning your back on sin and ruling your own life, and turning to God, by trusting in Jesus.-----
 Jesus says to his hearers that at the day of judgement the people of Nineveh will condemn this generation.
 We read about their repentance in Jonah ch3.-----
 And now something greater than Jonah is here.-----
 We've heard Jesus say he can give a greater rest than the Sabbath, he's a greater King than David, bring us to greater closeness to God than the temple.
 Now he's saying he's a greater prophet than Jonah.----
 And greater than coming out of a fish after 3 days, Jesus will come out of the grave, never to die again.
 Beat that! says Jesus.-----
 But you refuse to repent and turn to me.-----
 Jesus is also greater than Solomon **v42**. His wisdom is greater than Solomon's.

The Queen of Sheba came from Yemen to hear Solomon (1 Kin 10)(**SLIDE**).
And she'll condemn you guys, Jesus says, for I have greater wisdom, but you refuse to listen.-----

Jesus is the one to respond to.

He is risen from the dead and he is Lord.-----

Have you responded by turning your back on sin, turning to him in faith?-----

And the challenge of each day is to keep doing that, every day.-----

Believe he is the King and Rescuer!-----

If you don't, you will Really Suffer. Point 2.------(SLIDE)

Just briefly in **v43-45**, Jesus is speaking of the danger of not responding to him.

The danger of rejecting him and the repentance he calls for.-----

He tells the story of a demon coming out of a person, not finding another place to rest, and the return to the person, with 7 other more-evil spirits.-----

Casting out demons, like the Jews did, v27, doesn't fix and save people.-----

The person's final condition, and situation in the end, can be far worse than before.

We don't understand lots about the action of demons and why they choose waterless places.

The story does tell us that if a demon is removed from someone, their heart and soul is a vacuum, and they are left open to attack and possession again.

They can be reinfected with more evil spirits.-----

However, if someone has had a demon driven out, and they trust in Jesus, then the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in them.

And when we have the HS our house is not vacant, so to speak.-----

When we have the Holy Spirit, you don't need to fear evil spirits entering you.

The Spirit of God is greater, Christians, you need not fear.-----[1Cor6.19; 2Cor6.14-15]

If you repent, then the HS takes up residence in you, and is the promise and guarantee of blessing and heaven.-----

But if you refuse to repent, you will end up in real suffering, experiencing worse consequences.

Ultimately, those who refuse to repent will experience the lake of fire, the second death of **Rev 20 (SLIDE)**.-----

There's no more fearful and terrible condition than that.-----

Jesus has bound Satan, he's greater than evil, he can save us from really suffering the judgement we deserve.

Come to him.----- Cling to him!-----

When we do, we have real reason to rejoice.

Our third point is Resolve and Rejoice.(SLIDE)-----

While Jesus is still speaking to the crowds his mother and brothers come up, wanting to speak to him.

Are they concerned for him, or ashamed of him and the dishonour he's bringing the family in the sight of the Jewish leaders?---

Matthew doesn't say.

Mark 3.21 says his family thought he was out of his mind.

John 7.5 says his brothers did not believe in him.-----

Look at how Jesus responds in **48**, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?"

While this tells us Jesus had blood brothers, born to Joseph and Mary after his birth; the point is, Jesus is inside a house as 13v1 makes clear, and his family are outside.

And being on the outside is a metaphor for being outside of Christ's kingdom.-----

It must have been painful to have his own brothers outside the kingdom.-----

Maybe you know the pain of having family who don't believe?-----

But Jesus proceeds to say to his disciples, his followers, 'Here are my mother and my brothers'. For **whoever does the will of my Father** in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.-----

Jesus is not downing loyalty to family, but what he is doing is elevating the importance of being in God's family.

He's exalting loyalty to God, not neglect of family.-----

He's saying his disciples are his family, those on the inside.

So he's exalting his disciples, and saying, being in God's family matters more.-----

When we resolve to turn from self-rule and come to Christ, we gain a real relationship with God as Father, and Jesus, our brother.

And how amazing and blessed we are to be part of God's family.

How amazing and privileged are we to be part of Jesus' family.

He loves us as his own mother, brother, sister.-----

Think upon that, and let it stir your heart, with joy and peace.-----

It also means Jesus is closer to us than our earthly family.-----

Maybe you've had to leave your earthly family to follow Jesus?-----

Maybe you've had to leave your family, to serve God far away, so others can join his family too.-----

We'll know that Jesus loves you deeply and personally.

He loves you as a brother or sister.-----

Even in lockdown, even in illness, even in weariness and trouble, you are loved by Jesus as family.-----

So rejoice.

Isn't that a huge reason to rejoice?-----And be thankful?-----

Take time to reflect on that when you need reasons to rejoice.-----

Jesus said back in **ch10 v37**, if you love your father or mother, son or daughter more than me, you're not worthy of me. You must love me more.-----

It's like what he says here.

The blessing of being God's children and part of Christ's family, loved as family, is for who?

For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven.-----

He doesn't say more here, as to what that means.

But in context, what have we been told to do? What has Jesus been teaching in the last 2 chapters?-----

11v20, we need to repent and turn to him.

11.28 we can come to him to find rest.

12.8 we should believe he is the Lord and the Messiah, The Servant of Isaiah.-----

He is powerful. He is not evil, but he is good.-----

We join God's family when we trust in what Jesus has done; not what we do.-----

And what Jesus has done is live perfectly in our place, die for us in our place, then rise to give us resurrection life too.-----

So we do the Father's will, we do what he wants, when we respond to Jesus in repentance and faith; accept him as Saviour and Lord.

Then we do the Father's will, when, as we heard last week, we speak good words from the heart, and bear good fruit.

We'll hear more about it in ch13, the Parable of the Sower.-----

Also back in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus in **7v21** he spoke of people doing his Father's will.

And there it's also about bearing good fruit in your life.

Hearing and acting on what Jesus says.-----

Shall we summarise it as, a life of love for God and love for others.-----

How is your trust in Jesus being shown in your love for God, and love for others?-----

I want to give you **3 real life examples** of what this looks like.-----

Something that really encourages me is thinking about how Jesus' brothers came to join God's family too, particularly **James**.

They didn't believe in him during his ministry.

But something happened in their hearts.

God did a miracle of grace in them.-----

By the time Jesus died and rose again, his brothers were believers.

Acts 1.14 says Jesus' mother and brothers were with, among the disciples.-----

Maybe because the risen Jesus appeared to James (**SLIDE**) – **1Cor 15.7**.-----

James the brother of Jesus, went on to lead the Christian church in Jerusalem.

He likely wrote the NT book of James.-----

And he was stoned to death as a martyr for Christ in AD 62.

James lived his later years and died trusting in Jesus as Saviour & Lord.-----

He died for his faith in and obedience to Christ and God the Father.-----

Love for his Lord even unto death.-----

The Olympics finished not long ago.

For those of you old enough to watch the 2012 Olympics, you may remember a female hurdler called **Lolo Jones.(SLIDE)**

In an interview Jones said, "As grueling as Olympic qualifying can be for an athlete, that pales in comparison to another challenge I face daily."

Jones is a 29-year-old virgin who is saving herself for marriage.-----

Jones said. "It's just a gift I want to give my husband. But please understand this journey has been hard. There's virgins out there and I want to let them know that it's the hardest thing I've ever done in my life.---- Harder than training for the Olympics. Harder than graduating from college has been to stay a virgin before marriage.

I've been tempted, (and) I've had plenty of opportunities."

She's a devout Christian, who's publicly spoken of the central role her faith plays in her life, and it helped her persevere.-----

She said in 2020 that's still the case.-----

Jones, was letting God determine her priorities and her sexual expression.

Whatever your age, Are you?-----

Many of us have been doing the **Generosity Project** in Growth Group.

In session 3 we hear from **Raph.(SLIDE)**

He and his wife arrived in Sydney from Burundi Africa, as Asylum seekers in 2013. Within 2 weeks his wife gave birth and they left the hospital, looking for a taxi with a baby car seat to take them home, waiting for ages.

And Jodie, in the bottom photo, saw them waiting for a taxi and she had a car seat in the back of her car, and she just asked if they needed a lift.

She dropped them home, and the next day left a note in their letterbox, saying if they needed anything to please call. And Raph did.

Jodie and her family gave them some warm clothes, bedding and things for the baby. It was a cold Winter.

But it wasn't just Jodie and her family who helped them. Her friends did.

And people from Jodie's church just came around and helped in many ways over time – meals made, invitations to dinner and coffee, help with baby-sitting, nappies, accommodation, their daughter was invited for play dates, financial support for their asylum seeker visa application, and a warm welcome and love from people at church.

It wasn't organized, it was a grass roots organic thing, where Christian people just saw needs and gave generously.

And Raph and his family's lives were blessed and changed.

And as the pastor of their church said, you see people living their faith out, in very tangible ways.

Care and money flowed because the Spirit of God moved in people's hearts, to help and encourage people, to be God's people.-----

We thank God for the many and various ways, various people at Bundy, have shown and received similar support, people whose faith in Jesus is being lived out; people who are doing God's will.

So many of you.-----

When we're part of God's family, saved by Jesus, it changes us, doesn't it?-----

In what way has Christ, and Raph's moved you to be generous?-----

What might that look like, even this week?-----

What will you resolve to do?-----

Respond to Jesus by believing in him because of the miracle of the resurrection, repenting and doing God's will from now on, because you're part of his family.

Obey because you know how privileged you are to be loved, saved and welcomed by Christ.

Let's pray