

There are 3 basic personal qualifications which Jesus asserts for Himself in order to establish His superiority in all aspects of His redemptive work: “He is greater than the temple” (Mt. 12:6), “greater than Jonah” (Mt. 12:41), and “greater than Solomon” (Mt. 12:42). In these three claims, Jesus demonstrates His right to put His saving hand on every aspect of our lives. He is indeed our only Redeemer. There is no other name in which we hope. Let us ask God to increase our confidence in the *sufficiency* of Christ for every situation and life-challenge we face.

Monday: Read Matthew 12:6 and 12:38-42

The Only Prophet, Priest, and King

In Matthew 12, Jesus is patiently proving that He is **the** great Priest of God: “greater than the temple” (Mt. 12:6); that He is the great Prophet of God and “greater than Jonah” (Mt. 12:41); and that He is the great King sent from God, “greater than Solomon” (Mt. 12:42). Let us think today of Christ’s superiority in all these vital ways.

Meditate and Pray:

- If it is a matter of *access into God’s presence on our behalf*, He is the only Priest who can obtain forgiveness from God and acceptance into His holy presence. No man-made temple or priesthood can do this.
- If it is a matter of *truth which we can apply to every life-situation*, His truth is greater and more practical than any other prophet who ever walked on earth – even Jonah.
- If it is a matter of *deliverance from the bondage of the kingdoms of this world into the security, wealth and blessing of God’s Kingdom*, Jesus is greater than Solomon in His royal wisdom and power.

Tues/Weds: Read Matthew 12:39-45 and Luke 11:29-30

Sent Away to the Harvest

We do well to ponder in a special way how Jesus emphasizes Jonah as a symbol of His own ministry and resurrection. About a year before His death, while still in Galilee (see Matthew 11:1 and 11:20-24), Jesus declares that He will rise from the dead in the same way that Jonah was miraculously saved from the fish’s belly (Mt. 12:40). In the same way, almost a year later and shortly before His death, He again likens what is going to happen to Him to what happened to Jonah (Luke 11:29-30).

Take a closer look at what Jesus says in comparing Himself to Jonah. He says that He will be a sign to His generation in the same way that “Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites.” What can this mean? Well, consider the message of Jonah to the Ninevites. He declared judgment on that great city in its unbelief, announcing that, “in forty days Nineveh would be destroyed by the judgment of God” (Jonah 3:4). Then the miraculous happened: God granted these unbelievers repentance so that they sought God’s forgiveness and received it, in response to Jonah’s message. As Jonah 3:10 says, “When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction He had threatened.”

How does this apply to Jesus’ own people and generation? It is the sober contrast between the *hard-hearted, unbelieving* response of Israel to Jesus and the *heartfelt repentance* of Nineveh to the preaching of Jonah.

What then is Jesus going to do, since His own generation persists in its unbelief and will not heed even a prophet like Himself, though so much greater than Jonah? He will turn back to the great cities of the Gentiles like Nineveh! Since Israel refused the prophets, and stoned those sent to them, Jesus will imitate His Father’s

mercy to the people of Nineveh by going as God's prophet to the Gentile world, which will repent just as the city of Nineveh did. Thus both Jonah and Jesus prove to be a sign of the Gospel being sent *away from Israel into the Gentile world!*

Meditate and Pray: What a sober word this is about the people of Israel, as the subjects of God's outward Kingdom, being thrown out so that the Gentiles can come in (Matthew 8:11-12). On the other hand, what a joy to see God take His Gospel to new peoples, nations and tribes who are hungry for the bread of the Gospel! I have heard pastors from the USA say to me that all committed believers should be involved in missions, if for no other reason than to have the joy of meeting people eager for the truth! We in our country live in a day in which the love of many has grown cold. But lift up your eyes! Look at the great harvest coming in from every corner of the earth! God's Gospel is still full of power! Hallelujah!

Thursday: Read Matthew 12:46-50

Inside the House

There is a chasm between an external blood tie to Christian things ("I go to church because my family always has," or, "I believe in God because I am American") and a living relationship Jesus Christ. This is why Jesus' relatives are left standing outside the house while Jesus teaches, and those who are His true brothers and sisters, united to Him by a faith in His saving words, find saving access to Jesus (Matthew 12:48-50). The lesson is clear. Only those who receive Jesus in all His saving work for their souls will be adopted into His family.

That saving work is described for us most clearly in question # 23 of our Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Q: What offices doth Christ execute as our Redeemer?

A: Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.

In other words, Jesus' true brothers and sisters long for His teaching as their Prophet, embrace His work of forgiveness as their Priest, and bow to His rule over them as their King.

Meditate and Pray: We do not boast of our "blood lines" in the church or of our ancestors' great good works. Neither do we magnify any personal privileges which the church has given us. All that matters is our paying heed to the word that comes from Jesus' lips. Ask Jesus NEVER to allow you to be so busy in matters of religion or church activities that you neglect sitting at His feet to hear His word. Use the words of hymn # 301 as a prayer to help you value His word more and more – especially as it reveals the work of Jesus as your prophet, priest and king.

*Join all the glorious names
Of wisdom, love, and power,
That ever mortals knew,
That angels ever bore:
All are too mean to speak His worth,
To poor to set my Savior forth.*

*Great Prophet of my God,
My tongue would bless Thy Name,
By Thee the joyful news
Of our salvation came,
The joyful news of sin forgiv'n
Of hell subdued, and peace with Heav'n.*

*Be Thou my Counsellor,
My Pattern, and my Guide,
And through this desert land
Still keep me near thy side:
Nor let my feet e'er run astray
Nor rove nor seek the crooked way.*

*I love my Shepherd's voice,
His watchful eyes shall keep
My wand'ring soul among*

*The thousands of His sheep:
He feeds His flock, He calls their names,
His bosom bears the tender lambs.*

*Jesus, my great High Priest,
Offered His blood, and died;
My guilty conscience seeks
No sacrifice beside:
His powerful blood did once atone,
And now it pleads before the throne.*

Friday: Read Matthew 12:50-13:9

The Abundant Harvest

The command of faith is narrow and specific: Believe in Jesus' truthfulness and listen to all He says! He who has ears to hear let him hear" (Mt. 13:9). Such attentiveness to the word of the Gospel is the fruitful soil in which Jesus sows His word in Matthew 13:8. Those who listen to Jesus and believe what He says will never be disappointed. From their heart, implanted with the word of God, will arise real fruitfulness – even up to one hundred fold (Mt. 13:8)!

So the first requirement of the Gospel of the Kingdom is that we receive Jesus as our prophet, who speaks to us fully about our salvation. How did Moses put it? "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you" (Acts 3:22).

Meditate and Pray: Use another hymn about the preciousness of the word which comes from Jesus' lips as your prayer today – hymn # 146:

*Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord;
My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word!*

*Bless Thou the truth, dear Lord, to me, to me,
As Thou didst bless the bread by Galilee;
Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall;
And I shall find my peace, my all in all.*

*Thou art the bread of life, O Lord, to me,
Thy holy Word the truth that saveth me;
Give me to eat and live with Thee above;
Teach me to love Thy truth, for Thou art love.*

*O send Thy Spirit, Lord, now unto me,
That He may touch my eyes, and make me see:
Show me the truth concealed within Thy Word,
And in Thy Book revealed I see the Lord.*