

## Signs (of the Undivided Kingdom)

#18 in our Series Jesus Stories

Mathew 12:13-42

September 20, 2014

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### Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are beautiful. I pray this morning that you would give us the courage to look at you, to see you well. Lord, would you cause us to preach your Word together, in Jesus' name, Amen.

### Message

For the last several weeks, we've been looking at a collection of "Jesus stories" from Mathew 11 and 12. At the start of Mathew 11, John the Baptist, (chained in Herod's prison) hears of Jesus' miraculous signs, yet doubts.

Jesus then talks about pipers piping and children dancing and a yoke that sets people free and turns labor into rest. At the end of last week's text, Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath and the Pharisees plot to kill Him.

Pharisee comes from the Hebrew word *Parash*, meaning "to separate." Pharisee means "the separate." The "separate" get angry that Jesus is not so separate. Then Jesus heals all His followers and appears to go to the Gentiles. Then He heals a blind mute demoniac. The "separate" acknowledge that fact, but hate that fact, for there's no one from whom they feel more separate – than a blind, mute demoniac.

Then, Jesus mentions the "unforgiveable sin" and a really strange thing about a tree. Then in verse 38 the scribes and Pharisees demand to see a sign. Can you imagine? After all that healing, prophecy, and deliverance, they demand to see a sign. (It makes you wonder who's blind, who's mute, and who's controlled by demons.)

Mathew 11:38

*Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it".*

Yet, Jesus just did a boatload of miracles. Maybe you can't receive a sign until God gives you the ability to read the sign, until God opens the eyes of your heart... and how does He do that?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "no sign will be given it. . ." That's where Mark records the statement as stopping. Mathew and Luke record one more phrase.

Matthew 11:39

*But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."*

What is the sign of Jonah?

Several years ago, Mel Gibson made a movie about the sign of Jonah. It was easily the most controversial movie ever made. Some critics absolutely loved it, and some critics absolutely hated it. It was literally a crisis for everyone that saw it.

I'd like to show you a clip from one of my very favorite movies of all time, - a Mel Gibson Movie

Movie clip from *Signs*

[Graham (Mel Gibson) is quickly walking through corn fields. His son (Morgan) is staring off into the distance.]

Graham: [Out of breath and a bit nervously] *Morgan what's happening?*

Morgan: *Dogs are barking; they woke us up.*

Graham: *Are you hurt?*

Morgan: *I think God did it.*

Graham: *Did what, Morgan?*

[Morgan continues to stare off into the distance. Graham slowly moves forward through the cornfields followed by Morgan. He moves out into an area where all the corn has been cut to the ground. The camera pans out and it becomes visible that a perfect circle has been cut in the middle of the corn field followed by several circular shapes that appear to be some sort of foreign message, writing or code. (Mysterious music plays in the background).]

That's an absolutely awesome movie. It's titled – *SIGNS*

Mel Gibson plays a pastor named Graham who's lost his faith in God because of a personal crisis. He watched his wife die pinned to a tree by a truck. Now, he must father his two children without her. His son has life-threatening asthma and his daughter is neurotic about stale water, and so leaves glasses of water all over the house. His brother is a washed up baseball player named Merrill, who has no place to live other than with Graham. On top of everything else – He's got crop circles. People say they're signs – but he no longer believes in signs.

One night, UFO lights appear all over the world. As he and his brother Merrill watch the news, Merrill turns to Graham for comfort and faith. Graham says:

There are all different ways you can tell that there's someone really there watching out for us. You see signs. Sometimes they're little ones: you think of someone – the phone rings, they're on the phone. Sometimes they're big: like fourteen lights hovering over Mexico City. Sure there are a lot of people watching this who think this could be a bad thing. But, there are a lot of people watching this who think it's a miracle, a sign of God's existence. It's all in how you look at things Merrill. What you have to decide is, what kind of person you are.? Are you the type who believes in miracles and looks for signs or are you the kind who just believes things happen by chance?

Merrill says he's a miracle kind of guy. Then Graham tells Merrill about his wife's last words as she died nailed to the tree by the truck. He says, "She told me to "see" and then she said, "tell Merrill to swing away." Merrill's eyes get big and Graham says,

Know why she said that? Because the nerve endings in her brain were firing on some old memory of a baseball game. There is no one watching out for us, Merrill, we're all on our own.

Well, the evil aliens attack and this is how the movie ends:

Another Clip from *Signs*

[An alien has attempted to poison Morgan, but because he is having an asthma attack (which prevents him from breathing) the poison doesn't get into his lungs. Graham's family is running through the house in urgency, trying to get out as quickly as possible as aliens are attacking it. The daughter runs outside to safety. Graham carries Morgan outside to treat his asthma attack while Graham's brother is confronting the alien. The daughter watches Graham's brother as he confronts the alien head on. The alien is defeated by water that falls on it and reacts like acid to the alien's skin killing it. The camera pans out to show signs of destruction and battle left throughout the house.]

Graham: [Outside speaking to his brother who has recently joined him after the defeat of the alien]

*That's why he had asthma. It can't be luck.*

*His lungs were closed. His lungs were closed.*

*No poison got in. No poison got in.*

*His lungs were closed. His lungs were closed.*

[Graham's brother tries to touch him.]

Graham: *Don't touch him. Give him a minute. Give him a second.*

Morgan: *D-Daddy...*

Graham: *Don't touch him*

Morgan: *Dad? What happened? Did someone save me?*

Graham: *Yeah, baby, I think someone did.*

Morgan said, “Did someone save me?” Graham responded, “Yes, baby, I think someone did.” How? Well Graham remembered the words of His dying wife pinned to the tree. Then, he ‘saw’ and he told his brother to “Swing away!” Merrill swung at the water glasses left by Graham’s neurotic daughter. The water burned the aliens and the poisonous gas secreted by the aliens, to kill Graham’s son, didn’t...all because his lungs had closed due to the asthma. The next scene in the movie shows Graham adjusting His clerical collar and heading back to church.

So, because of his wife’s suffering, he lost faith and died and yet, because of his wife’s suffering, he gained faith and was like, born again. In fact, everyone was saved because of the way his bride suffered on the tree. When He judged the tree bad, and its fruit bad, He was trapped in hell. But, when He judged the fruit good and somehow the tree good, his whole world came together and everything became a sign, because of the one sign: His bride’s suffering on the tree.

Well, it’s just a movie – but it makes some good points:

- Some say there are no signs and therefore there is no meaning.
- Some say there only some signs and so they spend their whole life seeking signs, but don’t read the signs.
- Some say the world is full of signs – in fact, it’s all signs. It’s just that the eyes of our hearts are blind, so we can’t read the signs.

Do you ever ask for a sign? I sure do. Do you ever say, “God, if I only had a sign, I’d believe?” “God, there is so much suffering in this world, how could a good God allow such suffering?”

You’ve probably all seen pictures of evil this week, on the news, like the ISIS militant dressed in black and the prisoner kneeling before him about to die. You know the picture. Don’t you ever ask “God, where are you in this picture?” “So much suffering and where’s the sign?”

In Matthew 12:39 Jesus says, “*No sign will be given the evil and adulterous generation except the sign of Jonah.*”

What’s the sign of Jonah? Well, let’s read Mathew 12:38 in context.

In Matthew 12:13-14 – what we read last time. Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath and the Pharisees plot to kill him.

Matthew 12:15-21

*Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all (Healed them all!) and ordered them not to make him known. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: Behold, my servant (that’s the suffering servant) whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice (Krisis – judgment) to the Gentiles. He will*

*not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings judgment to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope.*

It sounds like the Gentiles (those that the Pharisees separated themselves from), *like* the Suffering Servant's judgment. And it sounds like He heals the Gentiles, including, "bruised reeds" and "smoldering wicks." He doesn't snuff them out, but heals them and includes them.

In Matthew 12:16 Jesus heals all that follow him and yet tells them not to tell. Why would He do that? Maybe because the scribes and Pharisees can't yet read the signs. It can be dangerous to seek signs if you can't read the signs.



Like this is probably NOT a great sign to seek and yet not read.



It's probably NOT wise to just stand there admiring this sign without perceiving what it means.

*"An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign."* Adulterers seek signs of Love and in the process crucify Love, for they don't know what Love means.

Well, verse 21: *"in his name,"* the name Jesus means "God is Salvation," *"in his name will the Gentiles* (the separated from the separate) *hope."*

Matthew 12:22-29

*Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "it is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided*

*against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.”<sup>2</sup>*

Jesus is plundering Satan's house. He just said, “*Every house. . . Every kingdom divided against itself will not stand.*” Satan may refuse to admit it, but his kingdom is only himself (which isn't a kingdom) or his kingdom is profoundly divided. (Demons do not have loving communion one with another.)

In the Revelation, the beast, the harlot, and the kings of the earth all hate each other and so Satan's kingdom devours itself. Paul writes “*It's Love that binds everything together.*” And see? There's not much Love in Satan's kingdom. So there is no endless hell, that Satan rules as king. Satan is “adversary” by definition. Satan's kingdom is divided and will not stand.

Is God's kingdom divided? And will it stand?

You know, I'm not sure that we can even imagine an undivided kingdom.

- It's certainly not the kingdom of the United States! - Just look at our Senate.
- It's certainly not our economy, which runs on greed and competition.
- It's certainly not our educational systems, where we teach children to beat other children in order to advance themselves.
- Even at church, are we not constantly thinking of our own private kingdoms, which divide us from other kingdoms and trap us in ourselves?
- All creation devours itself. We call it “the survival of the fittest.” And we even credit that phenomenon with the creation of life.

We can scarcely imagine an undivided kingdom.

The great philosopher Jack Handy, from Saturday Night Live, wrote:

“I can picture in my mind a world without war, a world without hate. And I can picture us attacking that world, because they'd never expect it.”

Well, if the king of that world were to attack our world, what would that look like? Would we ever expect it? And what would be the sign of his presence—the sign of His Undivided Kingdom?

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<sup>2</sup> Well, it makes sense to us that Satan might cast out Satan as a tactic in a war. But Jesus seems to indicate that the presence of Love is not something that Satan can fake, like an act or a tactic. It's the actual presence of God and His Kingdom, so if you know Love, you know what Satan cannot know.

Matthew 12:30-32

*Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.*

Well, I've preached on these verses many times and I think it's clear that the unforgiveable sin is unforgiveness.

Jesus says that every sin will be forgiven except this sin. And Jesus already told us *"If you don't forgive neither will you be forgiven."* *"The judgment you pronounce is the judgment you receive."* –Blaspheming the Spirit of Love is ignoring the voice of Love which says, "Forgive, forgive, forgive—as you have been forgiven."

You see, we can take all sorts of things from God and He doesn't demand them back, but He says, *"Vengeance is mine."*

To refuse to forgive is to refuse to surrender judgment to God. God's judgment is Christ crucified. Through Christ, "God reconciles all things to himself making peace by the blood of his cross." And God's kingdom is the completely reconciled and undivided Kingdom. So, if you refuse to be reconciled, you judge yourself out of his Kingdom and into outer darkness...<sup>3</sup>until your judgment surrenders to God's judgment, until you forgive as you are forgiven. Unforgiveness is the unforgivable sin.

Sometimes I wonder if the modern western church has institutionalized the unforgiveable sin by saying that, to truly believe in Jesus and His cross, one must believe that some people can never be forgiven. What a strange and vile thing to say: that Jesus' death on the tree of ultimate suffering means eternal unforgiv

eness.

Verse 33-37

*"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out*

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<sup>3</sup> So this is wild, but do you see? I think forgiveness is the judgment of God. If you judge forgiveness good, you're in – If you judge forgiveness bad, you're out, where you will remain until you surrender vengeance to God and forgive as you are forgiven.

*of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

*“Either make the tree good and its fruit good or make the tree bad and its fruit bad.”*

That’s a bizarre statement, and yet every weekend, we come and worship God at the foot of a tree and then eat its fruit: Bread and wine, body broken and blood shed.

The tree is a picture of law: “the knowledge of good and evil” – knowledge of how we take life. And the tree is a picture of grace. Grace is how God gives life.

Do you make this tree bad and its fruit bad? Or, do you make this tree good and its fruit good?

Do you take the fruit as law or do you receive the fruit as grace?

Do you delight in condemnation and separation or do you delight in mercy and reconciliation?

This tree of ultimate suffering on which God Himself chose to be pinned to the wood presents us with a *Krisis*. We judge this tree and find out that the tree has been judging us all along.

Matthew 12:38-40

*Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 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.”*

What’s the sign of Jonah?

This is the sign of Jonah:

Clip from *The Passion*

Jesus: [Covered with wounds and blood and speaking from the cross]

*Father, forgive them*

[The camera moves to a Pharisees standing nearby watching Christ’s crucifixion and then moves back to Jesus on the cross]

*They know not what they do.*

[The camera moves back to the Pharisee and then show Jesus taking his final breaths.]

*It is accomplished. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.*

[Jesus exhales his last breath as He’s hanging on the cross, beaten and bleeding.]

That's the sign of Jonah. –And now do you understand why there was so much controversy around this film? (This is the film I was talking about, by the way, at the start of the sermon.) The movie, *Signs*, is about this, but this is this: The Passion of the Christ, the passion is the sign of Jonah.

No wonder the critics were so divided.  
We think we judge the sign and the sign judges us.

Jesus said, *“Now is the judgment of this world . . . and when I be lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself.”* John 12:33. *“He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.”* John 12.

The sign judges and shatters our lonely little self-centered independent kingdoms  
and draws us into the Kingdom of God.

The cross is the sign of the undivided Kingdom invading our kingdoms of division and death.

All other signs point to this sign: That on this day there was no sign, and that's the sign. The sign is infinite Love suffering for you.

All His healings reveal that He chose to bear our infirmities.

All the prophecies reveal that this was the plan from the foundation of the world.

All the deliverance reveals that Jesus chose to descend into every hell in which the children of Adam find themselves.

This sign is the Revelation of God's heart. God is Love and He bleeds Grace.

Adulterers seek the signs of Love and sacrifice Love in the process.

Love sacrifices the self for the beloved.

Adultery sacrifices the beloved for the self.

If a faithful lover is married to an adulterer, a heart will get crucified.

And that's the sign of Jonah – the incorruptible sign of Love.

That's the sign of the undivided Kingdom in our world of division.

That's grace, the blood of the great bridegroom - we are His bride.

Well, all signs point to this sign and this sign gives meaning to all the other signs. In the movie, *Signs*, it turns out that the greatest sign, is the sign that Graham most needed to see, it was the sign upon which he was most afraid to look, and that was the memory of his bride dying on the tree. He keeps having partial flashbacks the whole movie, yet when he finally hears the words of Love spoken from the tree, well, that sign gives meaning to all the other signs. In fact, it gives meaning to all things.

*“And this is the plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him. . . making peace by the blood of His cross.”* Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:20

The sign of Jonah

You know Jonah had been sent by God to preach to Assyrians in Ninevah. That’s approximately where ISIS militants make their horrifying videos today. That’s where that picture comes from.

Well, the Assyrians were far more barbaric than ISIS.

Jonah flees from God and Ninevah because he worries that God will forgive the Ninevites and make them part of His Kingdom. Well, as you know, Jonah is thrown overboard and swallowed by a giant fish. In Jonah 2:2 “He descends into the belly of *Sheol*,” (also translated hell). After two days and three nights, he gets vomited onto the beach, then travels 100’s of miles inland to Ninevah and preaches.

He must’ve been quite a sight: The Word of God in a suffering, weak and broken body of flesh. You see? I don’t believe the sign of Jonah is simply that Jesus rose from the dead. Lazarus and some others also rose from the dead and they’re not the sign of Jonah. And it was not given to “the evil and adulterous generation” to see Jesus risen from the dead. But, they all saw him suffer on the tree and they heard him say, *“Father forgive.”*

Jesus said that the sign is *“the Son of Man three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”* That’s Hades – that’s hell. I think he says three nights (rather than two nights) because His descent into hell began Thursday night as He said: *“This is my body broken for you, and my blood shed for you”* – eat and drink Me into you.

When we suffer, God chooses to suffer in us, for God has made us part of His undivided Kingdom. The sign of Jonah is the passion of the Christ. And, you see, it’s not just the pain of hammer and nails two thousand years ago. . . for what did Christ suffer on the tree?

Isaiah 42

*“My servant” (the suffering servant) “a bruised reed he will not break a smoldering wick he will not quench until he brings judgment to victory.”*

For, Isaiah 53

*“Surely He has born our griefs and carried our sorrows and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”*

“...of us all.” “...of us all.” That means all suffering is His suffering and so you are absolutely surrounded by the sign of Jonah.

You know, the greatest argument against the existence of God - is suffering, and maybe the greatest argument *for* the existence of God - is suffering.

Atheists say, “I can’t believe in a God of Love when there is so much suffering.” In other words, “I can’t believe in God because I believe in Love.” Well, what if “God is Love?” You see? We can only judge God by assuming God, and even more, assuming God in us, that is Love in us.

So, there may be some atheists who have a great deal of faith in God, for “God is Love.” And there may be some “Christians” who confess faith in God and have very little faith in God, for they don’t love Love or trust Love. They just love some signs of Love. I mean, they want God’s riches for themselves, but don’t want God to forgive their enemies. They don’t want God to be God. They don’t want Love and His undivided Kingdom.

Well, I was just saying perhaps all suffering is the sign of Jonah – that is – all suffering is the sign of the Undivided Kingdom and its King. For, when you see suffering, you see division and long for communion. When you see suffering, something in you wants to suffer with the one who suffers, for something in you says, “We are not divided.” I think that something is Love and God is Love.

Jesus says, “*whatever you do to the least of these my brothers, (the suffering) you do to me.*” Something in you recognizes Jesus in them and tells you “we are not divided.” And that something in you is the Spirit of Jesus in you.

So, Christ’s passion in them ignites His compassion in you, even creates Love in you. It shatters the kingdom of self and causes you to bleed mercy. The sign of Jonah: The sufferings of the Christ.

Any other sign an adulterous heart would use to feed its own adultery and thereby imprison itself deeper in its own kingdom of self and death. But, not so with the sign of Jonah – It shatters the kingdom of self and draws us into another. What could be a greater sign of the undivided Kingdom and its King than Love that chooses to suffer what others suffer and to do that in you – as compassion?<sup>4</sup>

Well, suffering is the sign and suffering is the judgment, so when you see suffering, something in you wants to suffer with the suffering, for it tells you “we are not divided.” And something in

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Perhaps God allows suffering in this world for a time so He can choose Love with you, in you, in time and treasure that choosing for all eternity.

you wants to separate from the suffering, for it tells you “I am the separate.” That something is death, not compassion, but Appassion, Apathos, Apathy. The Compassion is eternal and the very life of God. The apathy is death and must be destroyed, if you are to ever live in freedom and joy.

The sign of Jonah is the judgment of this world and the doorway to the Undivided Kingdom. The sign of Jonah is all around you and, if you dare to see the sign, - it makes all things new.

So

1. Don't hide from your own suffering, but look for Jesus in your suffering. It's there I find that all my sufferings are his sufferings because “We are not divided.” Don't hide from your own sufferings.
  
2. Don't fear suffering in others.
  - Christ's passion in them ignites compassion in you and testifies – “We are not divided.” Jesus suffers in the abused. And Jesus suffers in the abuser.
  - One day, we'll see that sin is the darkest prison and deepest suffering. – Sin is separation from Love, and God is Love. So, in Jesus, Love chooses to suffer even there: In men like Saul of Tarsus – who murdered Christians and then discovered Christ in himself (Galatians 1:16 – “*God revealed His son in me*” as if He was there all along, suffering even as Saul stoned Stephen, the first martyr.
  - So, He suffers in prisoners slaughtered by ISIS militants and he suffers in the tortured souls of those very militants.
  - What's He doing in that picture of suffering? He's suffering and reconciling all things to himself, making peace by the blood of his cross.
  - So, when they crucified Jesus, He cried, “*Father forgive,*” that is “we are not divided” and then He gave blood to those, who took blood. That's how he conquers evil and sets us all free.

So don't be afraid of suffering in others.

3. Don't be afraid to suffer *for* others, for then you become “the sign of Jonah,” you are “the body of Christ.”
  - Happiness is just a word used to describe an undivided body.
  - Peace and prosperity is an undivided kingdom.
  - Ecstasy is losing the lonely kingdom of yourself and then finding yourself in the undivided Kingdom of God.
  - When you suffer with those who suffer, you participate in uniting all things in Jesus and so all things become meaning full and everything turns into joy.

And so,

4. Don't be afraid to suffer with those who suffer because *"His yoke is easy and His burden is light."* If you truly suffer with those who suffer, I think that must be Love and God is Love. And love bears all things." You see?
  - The burden is Love's responsibility. In other words, You *"weep with those who weep"* but Love will stop the weeping and make all things new.
  - You see, Love shows us the depths of his passion and then rises from the dead.
  - Love turns our mourning into dancing, and our sorrow into joy. – *Our joy in the undivided Kingdom, the body of Christ.*

In one of her books, Mother Teresa wrote about a young nun who came from a well-to-do family to serve in Calcutta. Along with others, Mother sent her to her house for the dying on her first day.

*Before they went, writes Mother Teresa, I told them, "You saw the priest during Mass: with what love, with what delicate care he touched the body of Christ! Make sure you do the same thing when you go to the Home, for Jesus is there in the distressing disguise." And they went.*

*After three hours, they came back and one of them, the girl who had come from the university, who had seen so much, so many things, came to my room with such a beautiful smile on her face. She said, "For three hour I have been touching the body of Christ."*

*And I said, "What did you do, what happened?"*

*She said, "They brought a man from the street, covered with maggots, and I knew, though I found it very difficult, I knew that I was touching the body of Christ."*

That was the sign of Jonah. This is the sign of Jonah [Peter points to the communion bread and wine.]

## **Communion**

*On the night He was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying, 'Take and eat – my body given to you' and in the same manner and having given thanks He took the cup saying 'Take and drink the covenant in my blood.'*

This is “the sign of Jonah,” and wow watch.  
In a few minutes you will see it’s all around you.

[Several worship songs are sung.]

## **Benediction**

Passion clip

[Inside the tomb that Jesus was buried in, the camera slowly pans over empty cloths, the cloths that Jesus was wrapped in upon his death. Shadows turn to light and then we see the profile of Jesus resurrected. (Drums begin to beat and increase in intensity and volume.) Jesus stands and the camera focuses on his nail pierced hands as He exits the tomb!

After all that suffering in the earlier *Passion* clips, I thought I should show you the end of the movie.

THE END IS ETERNAL-THE SUFFERING IS TEMPORAL.

The suffering is happening now, but the end is also happening now. The end happens when we face our suffering.

I think all of Satan’s power comes from our refusal to face our suffering with Jesus. Suffering is surrendering control. Surrendering control is death. *“Satan traps us in lifelong bondage through fear of death.”* But maybe God allows suffering to happen in this world for a time so that He could choose love within us and with us in time, and then we could cherish that choice for all eternity. Our God is love and we choose love with Him. That’s good news.

You see? The cross is a door, and we go to the cross. We die with Him. We rise with him, and we become who we truly are. Jesus wants to show you: “I’ve got you covered.”

In Jesus’ name, believe the gospel, and walk out into this world with courage. Amen

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don’t be shy about informing us of errors.*