Wednesday 24th February 2021 Luke 11:29-32 & Jonah 3

I don't know about you, but I quite like playing amateur detective, and it appears I am not alone this Christmas' *The Thursday Murder Club'* by Richard Osman sold 700,000 copies. It outsold Barrack Obama and David Walliams. There is something immensely satisfying in being able to watch a crime thriller or read a book and work out who committed the evil deed before the hero or heroine.

It seems to me often, the detective's ability is being able to spot one or two relevant clues out of the mass of information that mostly seems irrelevant to us. As we read the novels or watch the show, we can all too easily get caught up in the plot and the lives of the central characters, meaning we can easily miss the one thing that told us the truth all along.

Jesus opponents ask him for a clue to know the truth of what's going on, but he refuses to provide one. They've got to figure it out for themselves, and he knows they are not up to it. They have blinded themselves to the real clues that are all around them, and by the time the plot is finally unveiled, it will be too late. Matthews's account of this story (Matthew 12:33-42) does provide us with a clue, but it is missed by the crowd when he says, 'The son of man will be three days and nights in the heart of the earth' this is an odd way of saying he die and will be buried, this ties Jesus' future with that of Jonah.

In other words, Jesus' resurrection after he has been thoroughly dead and buried will be the clue that even his opponents won't be able to miss. But by then, the moment will have passed, and they will be judged for their failure to read the clues that, were in fact, in front of their noses all along.

Jesus makes the point more strikingly by looking ahead to the day of judgement and comparing his Jewish cotemporaries unfavourably with certain pagans of old.

First, let us consider the story of the prophet Jonah himself. After his extraordinary escapade with the large fish, he preached to the great city of Nineveh, warning it will be overthrown. The people repented of their wickedness, and the city was saved. Second, the Queen of the South (or Sheba -1 Kings 10:1-10) came from a faraway in southern Arabia to listen to King Solomon's wisdom, reputedly the wisest king in all the antiquity. The people of Nineveh and the Queen of the South responded to the revealed message of the God of Israel, in one case through a prophet and in another through a king. Both of these give us clues that firstly, Jesus is not only a prophet what a lot of people believed Jesus was, but it also offers us the most significant clue, the fact that Jesus is also the true king of the Messiah, which Jesus confirms when declares that one greater than Jonah and Solomon is here.

Then, Jesus' charge against his opponents is that they are like readers of detective fiction who can't spot the clues because they are busy with their own agendas. The same question presses on us today, can we see to the heart what's going on in the life and work of Jesus, the church or the world? On judgement day, will the ancient pagans who listened to Jonah and Solomon have to say that we have missed the significant and apparent clues while they picked up on the smaller ones?