Scripture

Luke 11:29-32
While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus said to them, "This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. At the judgment the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here. At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here."

Our Scripture Reflection
Jesus lashes out at the crowds who are both arrogant and hard-hearted towards His message and ministry. He does so using a very powerful Old Testament image: the sign of Jonah. And what is this sign? Jonah was a Jewish prophet called by God to go preach repentance to his bitterly despised enemies, the Ninevites. Thinking there is a long shot that those pagans just might repent and be spared destruction, he refuses to do so. Why would he ever want his hated enemies saved??!! But God sees to it that Jonah does so via the belly of a whale. And when Jonah barely utters the call to repent, to his shock and horror, they all, even the animals, repent immediately. Jesus’ message to the crowds is meant to knock them down a peg or two. He is
telling them that if their bitterly despised enemies repented at a moment’s notice at the preaching of a prophet, what’s their excuse for not repenting when God’s only Son preaches to them???

Food for your Journey

We are such bookkeepers! And God is not! When the Ninevites repent, and the ne'er-do-wells at the end of the line get paid the same as the hard workers at the front of the line, and the people we judge most harshly receive the mercy of God, then it becomes painfully clear that there is something inherently unfair in the notion of grace. God does not keep track of things the way we do. God does not spend a lot of time deciding who is worthy and who is not, like we do. God does not give any of us what we deserve but what we need, and it is hard -- very hard -- to trust God's judgment on that score.

Is it right for us to be angry? If Nineveh is spared, who won’t shout hallelujah? And if those who show up at the end of the day open their envelopes to find a full day's pay, who will not rejoice? Only those who do not know who they are. The rest of us will be down in Nineveh at the party, whooping it up with all the other folks who do not know their right hands from their left, and also many animals.

--Barbara Brown Taylor, "Ninevites and Ne'er-Do-Wells" in Gospel Medicine, (Cowley, 1995), 103-104.

A Prayer from the Heart

Dear God, I am not nor could I ever be worthy of Your incredible mercy. I could never possibly match the gift of Your amazing Grace. My gift to You, however, is a humble, contrite and grateful heart, a heart committed to living the way of Your Son. Jesus. May efforts in doing so be pleasing to You. Amen