

Luke 7:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?

Analysis

Jesus likens His generation to children in marketplace: 'They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another' (Greek 'homoi oi eismn paidiois tois en agora kathēmenois'). The children's game involves mimicking adult activities—weddings (joyful) and funerals (mournful). The complaint 'we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept' illustrates unreasonable pickiness. No matter what tune is played, they refuse to respond appropriately. Jesus applies this to His generation's response to John's asceticism and His own sociability—both rejected. Reformed theology recognizes that unregenerate humanity resists God's messengers regardless of method. The problem isn't presentation but hearers' hardness.

Historical Context

Ancient marketplaces were public squares where business, social interaction, and children's play occurred. The game described—children trying to get peers to respond to different moods—was apparently common. Jesus used relatable illustration to expose absurdity of His contemporaries' inconsistent criticisms. This rhetorical technique appears throughout His teaching—parables from everyday life revealing spiritual truth.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do contradictory criticisms of Christian ministry reveal critics' hardness rather than ministers' failure?
2. In what ways do we resist God's message when it doesn't match our preferences?
3. How should ministers respond to unreasonable or contradictory criticisms?

Interlinear Text

εἶπεν	δὲ	ὁ	Κύριος,	τίνι	οὖν	ὁμοιώσω	τοὺς
said	And	G3588	the Lord	Whereunto	then	shall I liken	G3588
G2036	G1161		G2962	G5101	G3767	G3666	
ἀνθρώπους	τῆς	γενεᾶς	ταύτης	καὶ	τίνι	εἰσὶν	
the men	G3588	generation	G3778	and	Whereunto	are they	
G444		G1074		G2532	G5101	G1526	
ὅμοιοι							
like							
G3664							

Additional Cross-References

Lamentations 2:13 (Parallel theme): What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?