

SERMON FOR DECEMBER 15, 2018

TEXT: LUKE 7: 18-25

THEME: WHO ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

¹⁸ The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, ¹⁹ calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ²⁰ And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" ²¹ In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. ²² And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. ²³ And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

In the name of Jesus:

Christians sometimes ask other Christians: "Do you have any doubts about God?" It is a question that should be easy to answer, because if we are honest with others and ourselves we all at times have doubts. Sometimes those doubts are caused by Satan tempting us by asking us the age-old question: "Did God really say that?" Other times doubts arise because of circumstances that happen in our lives, events that cause us heartache and fear, and we wonder if God exists and if He really cares about me and what is going on in my life?

I think that is why this Gospel lesson is so helpful for us today, because as we see in the life of the great man of God, John the Baptist, yes God's people sometimes have doubts. John had doubts, which moved him to ask the question: "Are you the One who is to come or are we to look for another?"

Consider these words for a moment and who is asking the question. John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, the one who the Old Testament predicted was to come as the forerunner of Jesus, this is the one who is asking the question. John the Baptist, the one who was dressed in camel's hair and ate locust, who proclaimed in

the wilderness: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." This man who said that there is One coming after him that is mightier than he, and John was not worthy to pick up His sandals. The Baptizer, the one who baptized Jesus, who said to Jesus: "I should be baptized by You and it is You who is asking me to baptize You?" This great man of God, John the Baptist, who at the baptism of Jesus saw heaven open up and witnessed the Holy Spirit coming down as a dove to land on Jesus' shoulder, who heard God the Father proclaim from heaven: "This is My Son, My beloved, in whom I am well pleased." After all of what transpired in the life and ministry of John, it is amazing that we have come to this point in John's life and we hear him asking: "Are you the One who is to come, or are we to look for another?" If anyone should have had a strong faith without any doubts it would be John the Baptist! But here he is, asking the question, "Are you the One who is to come or are we to look for another?"

Let's not be too hard on John, because we need to understand all that he has been going through. He was at this time imprisoned at Herod's fortress and he was under arrest because he denounced Herod. King Herod was a wicked son of a gun, and his reputation of being an evil, vile, loathsome leader who would literally kill anyone to get ahead and to remain in power, Herod had John imprisoned and John was facing certain death. John knew his days were numbered, and very soon after raising this question of Jesus, John would be beheaded.

So John is held captive, all alone by himself in a dungeon, and he is beginning to think about Jesus. Is Jesus the One sent by God? John expected Jesus to come in judgment, but what John had thought Jesus would come to do, well, everything had

now turned upside down. Jesus, John thought, was to bring judgment upon sinners, but Jesus was not about bringing judgment, at least not yet. Jesus was all about bringing mercy, love and compassion upon sinners. Just note Jesus' answer that He sent back to John: "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them."

John had been confused and most certainly had his doubts. Jesus didn't look like the Messiah promised of old. Why didn't Jesus bring down Herod, the wicked king? Why is John in prison for following Jesus? Why is John suffering when he was only doing what he was sent by God to do? John is in agony, and yes, he has his doubts! That is why he sent others to Jesus to get an answer to the question that was haunting him in prison: "Are You the One to come, or are we to look for another?"

John was not some mythical hero of old; he was flesh and blood, a real live person, who had real life problems and doubts, just like you. He has his faults, and he had his own misunderstandings as to who Jesus really was and what He came to do. Just like you and me. Because there are times in our lives when things happen to us, and we ask God why is He allowing this to take place? We think that because we are a Christian, life should be smooth sailing and everything should be coming up roses in our garden of life. We think that just because we have faith in Jesus, we then should have trials and temptations, we shouldn't suffer illness, a lost job, be separated from loved ones, or that family and friends would die. When these things happen to us, and when we don't understand who Jesus is and why He came to

earth, then our world will be turned upside down and doubts will arise when bad things happen to God's people. When the answers to our problems in life don't turn out so nice and neat, we, like John the Baptist, ask the question of Jesus: "Are You the One to come or are we to look for another?"

Yes, John had his doubts, and we do too! But note what John does, he takes his doubts to Jesus! John sent his disciples to Jesus to get his questions answered! We read in the Bible: ". And John, ¹⁹ calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ²⁰ And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'"

Jesus answers John by pointing John to the Scriptures. Jesus is actually fulfilling prophecy when He goes about showing mercy and grace. His actions speak for themselves, for the Bible said that when the Messiah comes: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy, for The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;"

Jesus was telling John that now is the day of salvation, now is the time for sinners to repent, now is the time to turn to Christ, confessing their sins for the

forgiveness of their sins, now is the time for grace, the Day of Judgment will wait, that will come later.

Until that time, Jesus is calling all those who labor and heavy laden by the burdens and problems of the world to Him. There is no doubt that Jesus is the One who was promised by God, because Jesus was doing the works of God that He was sent to do!

That is why the story continues and we read: “When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ²⁵ What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. ²⁶ What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ²⁷ This is he of whom it is written, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’ ²⁸ I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” John was right all along. John was sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus. Jesus is the One who was promised, the One who came to take away the sins of the world. Jesus fulfilled all of Scripture, for He was the One born of a virgin, born to keep the Law for the lawless, to die the death we all deserve, and then rise again to forgive the sins of sinners and give life to all who believe on Him. And Jesus is the One you can look to in your doubts, your trials, your temptations, and your questions. He will never turn you away, but He will always deal with you in love and mercy.

John's question was answered when he looked to Jesus for the answer. And Jesus answers you when you have questions and doubts as well. So look to Jesus, and cast your doubts and cares upon Him, for Jesus cares for you!

Amen