

What Are You Coming to See?

Luke 7:18-28

Trinity Lutheran – Kearney, Missouri

December 16, 2012 – Third Sunday in Advent



In the name of the Father, and † of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Last week we saw the forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist, as he went about doing what he had been called by God to do – to pave the way for Christ, the Messiah, and to point all people to Jesus that they might know from whence their salvation comes. But this week we seem to have stumbled on to something quite odd – namely, that Jesus, the Messiah, to whom all the prophets pointed – the One prophesied from the beginning of all things – the One whom John made abundantly clear was the promised Savior – was now pointing people back to John!

What is this all about? Why have the tables been turned topsy-turvy? When the disciples of John were sent to find out whether or not Jesus was really the Messiah – and Jesus showed them quite clearly that, yes, He was who He had claimed to be – why then did our Lord make such a big deal about John? I would like to suggest that it was to help us and all people clearly see what it means that He, Jesus, is the Savior. Because, let's face it, people quite often – including ourselves – have a wildly distorted view of who Jesus is, what He does, what that means, how who He is and what He does impacts to your daily life – and finally, though not least, what it means and how it affects who you are and how you live.

So Jesus asks some questions. What did you go out to see? What were you expecting when you went out to hear this strange prophet in the wilderness – a reed shaken by the wind? Surely you weren't going out there just to see the scenery. You weren't out there just to witness a spectacle. Were you looking for someone who would waver in his message? Were you trying to find a preacher tailoring his sermons to what people want to hear? Is that who you went out to see? Well, says Jesus, if that's what you wanted, sure-

ly you discovered that John was no wind-shaken reed, but had come to proclaim only what God called him to proclaim.

What then did you go out to see, Jesus continues, a man dressed in soft clothing? Did you think this curious prophet was some court preacher commissioned by the king? That might have been something to see – a man dressed in fine clothing, delivering a fine message out in the middle of nowhere, for surely those who dress in splendid clothing don't live out in the desert but in the luxury of a king's court. John was not out there because of his status or standing, but because God had called him to preach what you as sinners need to hear.

So then, what *did* you go out to see, Jesus finally asks, a prophet? Yes, and more than a prophet. This is the one of whom it was written, "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You. I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John." Is this not a stunning statement? Every good Jew could point to men such as Moses, Abraham, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and others who were considered to be great. But no, says Jesus, John is greater. Yet how is that possible? It's possible because John had been given a greater task. He would be the first to proclaim that God had finally kept His promise to send the long-awaited Messiah, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those under the Law, even as all the other prophets had foretold. It was John's singular task, as the last of the prophets, to live at the time of, and to point people to the Christ of their salvation.

And that brings us to an even more remarkable statement, for next Jesus says: "the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than John." But how could that be? It could only be because of who Jesus is. It could only be because Jesus Himself, as the Source and Center of all

things, is the One who alone is able to make this happen. What had the crowds come out to see – healings, spectacles and rousing preaching? Well, if that was what they came to see, they most certainly would find it, but not in the way they expected. It would come in the upside-down-to-us way in which Jesus lifts up and sustain the lowliest of the lowly – those who recognize that before God, because of their sin, they have nothing to offer. These were to be the greatest, because Jesus would raise them up, forgive their sins, and grant them eternal life.

Now comes a question for you. What have you come here to see? Have you come expecting some emotional, spiritual spark? Have you come seeking success in life – or perhaps a smoother road? Have you come looking for “spiritual fulfillment” that will cater to your own special needs and feelings? What have you come to see? What are you searching for? What do you expect to find? The things John’s disciples brought back for him to hear were things like a remembrance of the healing of the centurion’s servant and other such miracles. They would have reminded John about how Jesus raised a man from the dead. They would have brought these things to his memory because when they asked Jesus if He was really the Messiah, He didn’t say “Yes!” He didn’t ask them to go tell John that He would spring him free from prison. Instead He pointed him to those things he knew already which would prove He was the Messiah.

What do you suppose John thought about Jesus after hearing the report from his followers? After all his forerunning, all the times he had pointed the way and paved the road for the hearts and minds of sinners to receive their Savior – why, in prison, had John found himself needing the consolation of that very same Savior? Luke calls John’s disciples “messengers.” And what that tells us is that they were first sent by John, and that Jesus then sent them back to John with a message – the very same message John himself had proclaimed – that Jesus is the Savior, the One they had been seeking. There was no need to look for another.

Dear Christian, you can search far and wide. You can try to mold Jesus and His Word into whatever you want them to be – and many have. But Jesus’ message is crystal clear. He is simply the Savior – nothing else. Whether you’re locked up or roaming free. Whether you’re battling cancer or at the top of your game – whether you’re feeling run down or the sky is the limit – though you may be decimated, despondent or depressed over the events of the last few days in Connecticut – in anything and everything, Jesus is still Lord. Jesus is still the Promised One. And God will keep His promises even when they don’t match your expectations. He did, after all, suffer brutally on Calvary’s cross for you. He was beaten down and quietly took the insults heaped on Him which are rightly yours. He stretched out His arms so they could be nailed to the wood of the cross as you deserve – though He could easily have stretched them out in revenge and walked away from it all unscathed. But that would not have saved you from your sin.

So, what have you come to see? A Savior? Well, if that’s what you’ve come to see, you will find Him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. You will see Him dying the bloody death on Calvary’s cross you deserve. You will behold Him three days later emerging from the grave in glorious triumph over sin, death and the devil. But none of these things were done to demonstrate who He is. To do that He simply comes to you here in this place hidden under bread and wine with His very body and blood given and shed for the forgiveness of your sins. He comes in Word, water, bread and wine, His Church and His ministers – and all of it for you, so that you may be healed and raised up to live a new life free from sin, here in time and there in eternity, together with all who believe and trust in Christ as Savior. Amen.

And now that peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in that one true faith in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.