

Jesus Is The One

In our message this week and perhaps in the next, I would like for us to take a careful look at how God draws men and women to the Lord Jesus for salvation, and as He does that, how He can then also put within their hearts an insatiable desire to pursue Him and to follow hard after Him, even for all the days of their lives.

And we begin here in Luke chapter 7, where we find that the followers of John the Baptist have come to John questioning who the Lord Jesus really is.

With John in prison, these men had been following the Lord Jesus around the countryside, hearing Him teach and preach and witnessing His performing of miracles and healing people, and they were uncertain as to exactly who Jesus was.

While we aren't able to know all that was taking place in those moments, we do know that God has a plan for all men, and that He is always at work, carrying forward that plan. And the central essence of His plan is to draw men's hearts to the Lord Jesus so that they can begin to pursue after Him.

Folks, for those men, and for you and me, God will often use other messengers to direct us. And He had been doing that with John the Baptist. John's whole purpose for existence was to do this one ministry. He was God's chosen instrument to point other people to the Lord Jesus. And here in these words, John was doing exactly that.

Listen as I read these words for us again. This is Luke chapter 7, beginning in verse 18.

¹⁸Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. ¹⁹And John, calling two of his disciples to *him*, sent *them* to Jesus, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

²⁰When the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" ²¹And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight.

²²Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that *the* blind see, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised, *the* poor have the gospel

preached to them. ²³And blessed is *he* who is not offended because of Me." (Luke 7:18-23)

One of the great treasures that we have in God is that He has no boundaries or limits. He can see and speak and intervene across all the many generations of men. And that is what we see taking place here within these words of scripture today.

For many hundreds of years before the time of John the Baptist, God had spoken about John through the Prophet Isaiah, saying that at a special appointed time, another prophet, would rise up among the people of Israel, and that prophet would spend his days crying out to the people to repent of their sins, warning them of the judgment to come, "preparing the way of the Lord". Listen to those words from Isaiah 40:3!

³The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Isaiah 40:3)

John the Baptist was this one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord". And John was faithful to his calling. Denying his own needs and comforts completely, he dressed himself in clothing made of camel's hair, ate locusts and wild honey, and traveled throughout the land of Judea preaching that the Kingdom of God was truly at hand and that men and women must repent of their sins and be baptized.

And John's calling was an honored one, one more honored than any other calling that would be given to men. His calling was to proclaim the arrival of the "Coming One, the Messiah". And John did that many times and in many ways, and especially so on the day that he baptized Jesus. There by the Jordan River, John proclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world".

And John's message was powerful and persuasive, filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit, convicting many in that day of the wretchedness of their sins and of their need for repentance.

Many received John's message well, and were baptized, but not everyone, especially Herod the Tetrarch who became angry with John and had him thrown into prison. And that is where we find John as his followers bring him word about Jesus.

John's followers had been witnessing the powerful ministry of Jesus, His miracles and His salvation, and they brought John a report about Him. Listen again to verse 18.

¹⁸Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. ¹⁹And John, calling two of his disciples to *him*, sent *them* to Jesus, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" (Luke 7:18-19)

Some bible scholars say of this passage that perhaps John was going through a time of doubt. And perhaps he was. The isolation of prison can do that sort of thing to a person.

But I prefer to believe that something far more profound was taking place. I believe that by God's Spirit, John knew his days of ministry were quickly drawing to a close. And he also knew full well that his ministry of "repentance" was not the most important one. His ministry of "repentance" was only "opening up the doorway" for a far greater ministry that Jesus would bring, the ministry of "salvation".

And John knew that it was time for him to "decrease" and for the Lord Jesus to "increase". John knew that he was only a "friend of the Bridegroom", an "attendant" in the great wedding that was soon to take place between God's Beloved Son and His "Bride", the church. Listen, to the way that John expressed those thoughts in John chapter 3,

²⁵Then there arose a dispute between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. ²⁶And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"

²⁷John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.

²⁸You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' ²⁹He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is fulfilled. ³⁰He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

³⁴ . . . He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. ³⁵The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. ³⁶He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and

he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:25-30, 34-36)

John the Baptist was only a “friend of the Bridegroom”, and nothing more. And John understood his role, his place. And he dared not violate or go beyond that honored position. The “best man” in a wedding has no claim upon the “bride”. The bride belongs to the Bridegroom.

John’s disciples and all of the other people belonged only to Jesus, the Bridegroom. John knew that. I have no doubt that that is exactly what this whole portion of scripture was all about. It was a careful “handing forth” of those who had been following John, on to being followers of Jesus alone.

John wanted his followers to go directly to Jesus, to witness the proof of who Jesus was and then to follow Him. And that is exactly what took place. Listen first as John hands his followers on forward to Jesus! Verse 19,

¹⁹And John, calling two of his disciples to *him*, sent *them* to Jesus, saying, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”

²⁰When the men had come to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, ‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’” (Luke 7:19-20)

Folks, can we not see the loving, intentional hand of God in the way this took place. All along, John’s followers had been hearing the gospel through John’s preaching and they had believed it because they believed John. But now, they needed to take another step, the step of being brought face to face with Jesus so that they could believe in Jesus for themselves. It is what you and I must do with those that we minister to, our children and other family members and also each other. We must always eventually bring other people face to face with Jesus.

And then, note these next words carefully. Jesus answered their questions first with miracles. Verse 21,

²¹And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. (Luke 7:21)

Jesus allowed His miracles to speak for Him, proving the words of Isaiah the prophet about the coming Messiah. Listen to these words in Isaiah 35,

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. ⁶Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. (Isaiah 35:5-6)

And then, here in verse 22 we read,

²²Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that *the* blind see, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised, *the* poor have the gospel preached to them. ²³And blessed is *he* who is not offended because of Me." (Luke 7:22-23)

Jesus was truly the "One who was to come", the "Messiah". He did not have to prove Himself to those men, but He did anyway. He was gracious, knowing that their minds were small and reluctant to believe.

And folks, that is always the nature of the Lord Jesus. He is always gracious to our small and unbelieving minds and hearts, and He bows Himself down low, to our level, so that we might see and hear and accept His truth.

But we must also know that such moments of proof, of sight, are usually brief and only intended to give us enough aid to move us on to the next step, the step of "faith". Because it is faith and faith alone, not proof, that gives us entrance into the saving grace of the Lord Jesus.

That is said to us over and over again in these scriptures. Jesus Himself, in showing Thomas the wounds from His crucifixion, said to Thomas.

²⁹ . . . "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed." (John 20:29)

Folks, "faith", "believing faith" is absolutely essential in our relationship with Christ. And it is absolutely essential to our receiving eternal life. We cannot have real salvation without it.

And we dare not have any confusion in our minds about what faith really is. "Faith", real faith is not the simple act of acknowledging that God exists out there somewhere. Real faith goes much farther, much deeper into our souls.

“Faith” means following through on what John was asking his followers to do, and that is, to go personally to Jesus, to inquire of Him, “Are you the One?” “Are you the One that my heart secretly desires and yearns after?” But also asking, “Are You that One who so often brings torment to my soul when I go about my day insisting on having claim to my right to myself?” “Are you that one?” And “are You the One who then somehow stirs up my heart to know that You are the only Giver of real peace to my troubled soul?” “Are You that One?”

Folks, Jesus truly is that One and so much, much more. And if we dare place our stumbling trust in Him, He will also be the One who will carry us on forward into the next and the next and the next steps of our faith.

What a perfect Savior we have in Christ! He leaves nothing to chance. He carries us through each and every step. He brings us to a knowledge of our sins through the Holy Spirit’s use of people like John the Baptist. And then He brings us to repentance for those sins, a crying out to Him for His forgiveness and His “wiping away” of every sin.

And our part is the simple one. We need only to surrender our souls over to Him, to Christ, leaving, “abandoning” all else that we once placed our dependence upon, our self, our ideas, our philosophies, our mindsets, and then to simply rest ourselves into His gentle loving hands. That is “faith”, and nothing less will do!

John knew what was best for his followers. Yes, the truths that he had been preaching about repentance were extremely important. And those truths needed to continue to be preached, especially to those who were continuing in their unbelief.

But for these men, these followers of John, their hearts were ready to take that next step, the step of moving on from being mere followers of John the Baptist, on to surrendering themselves into the saving hands of Christ and on to becoming, in a special sense, the next “John the Baptists”.

And that is the special message that God has for you and me in these words of scripture. You and I are being brought along the same pathway as these followers of John. We have been brought to the realization of the sin within our souls, we have repented of those sins and we have been saved.

But those are only beginning steps, steps that bring us only to the entrance of that “narrow way” that Jesus spoke about. Now, there is much, much more that you and I must do and we must get on about it.

Like John the Baptist you and I are to carefully take up the banner handed to us by Christ, that of telling the next person and the next and the next about their need for the same repentance and salvation.

And like John the Baptist, we are to remain faithful to our calling, at any cost to ourselves.

There are people out there, many, many of them, even and especially some within our own families that are slowly dying in their sins. They are suffering the effects of those words in John 3, that tell us that “he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Our dear ones live each day by the principles and the demands of this world, and they suffer from it. Each day they renew their claim to their right to their self. They remain self-seeking and self-absorbed, all the while, slowly destroying every vestige of peace and happiness they might hope to have within their souls, their relationships and in their families.

And sin is always the culprit. It is ever and always at work within every person, seeking to control every life.

And we, you and I, are God’s first line of defense for their souls. You and I are being called to preach and to teach, as John the Baptist did, that Christ is among us, that He desires to wipe away every sin and to make each of us His Holy Bride.

And like with John, this ministry, this calling assigned to us will never be an easy one. Both we and our message will be rejected, often by those we love most. But rejection must never deter us nor discourage us. The message and the calling are far bigger than our personal feelings. And like the Lord Jesus, you and I need to be about the business of our heavenly Father.

We need to say so much more about the manner and the passion with which we follow after the Lord Jesus, but we need to close for now. It is my hope and if the Lord is willing, next week we’ll speak more about how we need to not only

give our hearts to the Lord Jesus in surrender, we need also to continue to “follow hard” after Him, every moment of every day.

For now, listen as we close!

³⁵The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. ³⁶He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:35-36)

May we pray.