

# “Is He the One?”

Luke 7:18-23

December 16, 2012

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent

The third Sunday in Advent is often referred to as the Sunday of Joy. The readings for the day usually emphasize the concept of joy (as our first two lessons today do). This Sunday is distinguished from the normally penitential tone of the other Sunday by lighting the pink candle in the Advent wreath, thus signifying a lighter mood for the day.

It is no wonder that there is joy to be had during Advent. I've always loved Advent since I was a young boy. A fresh new church year is starting. We put up the Advent wreath. We sing the beloved Advent hymns. We have special Wednesday evening Advent services during this time. There is a sense of joy in the air as we celebrate the coming of Jesus, our Savior, as a baby born in Bethlehem. All the Christmas decorations can't but help stir up joy in you.

There is a sense of excitement and anticipation if we take seriously our preparation for the coming of Jesus, our Lord, as Judge and King on the last day. We will be freed from the pain and suffering brought upon God's good creation because of sin. We will begin an existence in heaven that is so magnificent that it is beyond description. Scripture says of this new life, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9)

But do you know what? I've celebrated over 50 Advent seasons. Some of you have celebrated even more and there is still no sign of Jesus' coming. The evil, fear, and despair in this world are still strong. The horrible things that people will do to each other seem to be increasing: a shoot out in a mall in Happy Valley, Oregon; a football player in Kansas City who shoots the mother of his child and then commits suicide, and, of course, the event weighing heavily on everyone's minds this weekend: the senseless murder of 26 people (including 20 young children). The list could go on and on to the point where we almost become numb to the number of such incidents.

The church used to be a source of great comfort and strength during such times. But now churches have troubles just like the rest of the world. People experience conflict and disagreement within church walls. There are financial problems for many churches. Attendance and membership are down in many church bodies. We worry and fear for the future of our churches.

There is no sign of a heavenly kingdom, which Advent promises, anywhere in sight. If anything, things are worse. We strive to find happiness through holiday seasons like the one we are in, but it is only temporary at best. There is no heaven on earth – only sin, suffering, and death.

Did you ever allow yourself to think that this whole “Jesus thing” isn’t true? Many have done that. “The nones” – people who claim no religious affiliation in our country – make up 19.6% of the population and that number is growing. I’m sure you would never admit such a thing, even if you thought it, especially here in church. That would show doubt and a lack of faith. If you do not show it in what you say, do you show it in what you do? Are you looking for something other than Jesus to fulfill your life? Does the use of your time, energy, and resources show such a priority? If you have ever doubted that Jesus is coming back or if you have ever looked for something other than Jesus to give you happiness, hope, and fulfillment, then you have some good company as our text for today indicates.

John the Baptist had it going good early on in his life. He had been born in a miraculous way from his aged parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah. He had a divine call directly from God to serve Him. If you ever thought our church had a “golden age” when everything was going well, John had it even better. Hundreds, if not thousands, of people were flocking from all over Judea to hear him preach. He was pointing to Jesus as the Lamb of God – the Messiah – who would take away the sin of the world. He administered a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins which many received. He forcefully and successfully preached that the kingdom of heaven was now here in Jesus!

But then everything went wrong. King Herod arrested John and locked him up in jail. He had done nothing wrong. He had only been faithful in his calling to preach the Word of God when He

condemned Herod for taking his brother's wife as his own. All of his faithfulness earned him was a jail cell and nothing more.

As he sat there, rotting away in jail, he must have thought, "Where is that kingdom of heaven I was preaching now when I need it?" His disciples visited him and, as our text says, reported all the things that Jesus had been doing to John. Rather than rejoice in the One whom he had proclaimed to be the Messiah, John doubted. Yes, the great John the Baptist had been driven to doubt by the circumstances in which he found himself. He called two disciples to himself, sent them to Jesus, and told them to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

When Jesus heard the question, He didn't become angry. Nor did He give a simple "yes" or "no" answer. That would be too easy and too open for debate. Instead, Jesus simply told John's disciples, "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 the good news preached to them." While it's very nice that all these good things are happening to suffering and unfortunate people, what does it have to do with the question of John the Baptist's disciples?

Jesus is not avoiding the question. Jesus is answering the question. The Old Testament clearly stated what the Messiah would do to identify Himself and save the people of Israel. The prophet, Isaiah, said, "In that day [when the Messiah comes) the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." (Is. 29:18-19) Later on, Isaiah says, "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy." (Is. 35:5) Isaiah even prophesies what the Messiah will say when he comes, "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor." (Is. 61:1)

These are the things that the Messiah would do. These are the things which would happen when the Messiah came. Jesus came and these things are happening. These are the things which

Jesus was doing. It doesn't take much to connect the dots. If Jesus is doing the things the Messiah would do, then Jesus IS the Messiah. The teaching of the Word of God prophesied what would happen. Jesus' actions confirmed that the Word of God was true. John had no reason to doubt. Jesus is the One who is coming, the Savior of the World.

If and when you have doubts and ask, "Is Jesus what it's really all about? Is Jesus the One who will save us from the sin and evil which surround us?", He answers the question in the same way for us that He did for the disciples of John. Look at what you have seen and heard.

Isaiah prophesied about the work of the Savior to overcome sin, death, and the power of the devil. He wrote, "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:3-6) Jesus hung on a cross, bearing our infirmities and iniquities, and was pierced for those transgressions so that we might have forgiveness. The punishment that brought us peace was put on Jesus and now we have peace with God.

Isaiah went on to say, "After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities." (Is. 53:6) Jesus, after suffering and dying, saw the light of life again when He rose from the tomb three days later. Over 500 eye witnesses saw Jesus alive after He was killed. History has not been able to refute the resurrection. Jesus' promise, "Because I live, you will live also," is sure. (John 14:19) Therefore, we, too, will share in the light of life after we die.

If there is any doubt about who Jesus is or what He accomplished, look at what you have seen and heard. The Scriptures prophesied about what the Savior would do to save us. Jesus did all of these things. The Word of God describes it and Jesus' actions back the Word up. There is no reason for any to doubt. Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world. He has taken all sin upon Himself,

suffered the punishment for that sin, earned forgiveness for sin and peace with God by dying on the cross, and guaranteed eternal life by coming back to life on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day.

There is no need to wait for anyone else to come. Jesus is our “Coming One”. Because of what He has done so faithfully in the past, we know that He will faithfully do what He has promised for the future. He WILL come again to judge and condemn the world. He will finally remove sin and all of the evil and corruption which it has caused. There will be no more shootings, no more pain, no more sorrow or mourning and no more death, or dying ever again. There will be no more conflict in or persecution of the Church. Christ’s holy bride will be perfect in reality as she has been declared to be by faith. God will create a new heaven and a new earth and will give us life as He intended for life to be lived in perfect joy and in perfect peace for all eternity.

St. John sums it all up beautifully in Revelation, the last book in the Bible, where he states, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” (Rev. 21:1-5) John concludes His book with Christ’s promise and our prayer: “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”