

Shall we look for another?

St. Luke 7:18-35

A Sermon for Advent 3, 2018

The theme for the day is 'REJOICE!' The third Sunday in Advent. We lit the pink candle. That means Christmas is close. We heard from the prophet Zephaniah, "Rejoice and exult with all your heart," and from Saint Paul, "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say Rejoice." And we will go forth out into the community singing, Joy to the World." "

Today's gospel, it would appear is not full of joy. It seems there a sense of dissatisfaction. And of all people it is coming from John the Baptist. He is wondering, a bit perplexed, disappointed, as to why Jesus is not living up to expectations. And so the question, "Are you the one, or shall we look for another?"

What prompts this from the one who had leaped in his mother's womb when the Virgin Mary pregnant with the savior Jesus came to visit, and who prepared the way for Jesus by calling everyone to repentance, and who baptized Jesus and witnessed the descending dove and voice from heaven declaring, "This is My Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased," who pointed to Jesus, saying, "He must increase, I must decrease." Well Jesus has increased, and John has decreased. John finds himself in prison. I suppose you cannot decrease any more than that!

John is in prison for not having done anything wrong. In fact he had done something right. Very right indeed. What is going on?

From John's perspective, right about now would be a suitable time for Jesus to act. Lay the ax to the unfruitful trees, and burn the chafe with the unquenchable fire.. There are a lot of bad guys that need chopping and knocking down and starting to set things right. Bring your justice for your people who are suffering. Be their advocate. Be their defender. You Jesus are the long expected Messiah, Liberator and Judge. Remember John had said 'he who mightier than I is coming the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie...

John's business had been call people to repentance. And one of the bad guys he had called out, a really powerful guys at that, did not go all that well. Yep, it was Herod. Yep, he was from a ruthless, wicked family, did a really terrible thing by taking away his brother's wife, Herodias and committing adultery with her and making her his own. It was not good in the first century and it is not good in the 21st century. So John calls Herod on it. "Herod, you are sinning here, and God will judge you for it. Herod being king and powerful and Herodias not liking some crazy prophet calling them sinners – Well you get the picture. Throw John in prison.

For John I suppose this can present some problems. Doing the right thing, speaking the truth to power, and instead of Jesus backing him up let us it happen that he be thrown in prison. And instead Jesus laying the ax at the Herod tree, John will soon have the ax laid at his own neck. Where is the justice in this? Are you the Messiah, or should we look for another?

Do ever experience this yourself? Perplexed why God is not acting more for you. Why loved ones are ill and suffer from disease. Why I have not experienced financial success. Why friends are letting me down. All sorts of disappointments. Is Jesus really the one or should I look for another?

No beloved ones. You have not bet on the wrong horse. Let me assure you just as Jesus assured John the Baptist. "Go tell John what you have seen and heard." For to say that there is no joy in this gospel is misread it. There is joy in the blind receiving their sight. There is joy in with the lame now walking. There is joy with lepers being cleansed. There is joy with the deaf now hearing. There is joy with the dead being raised, and there is joy with the poor having good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

St. Paul writes today's Epistle sitting in prison. What is in for? Like John he spoke the God's truth to power. He proclaimed the salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ God's Son. Why can Paul rejoice in this situation. Because Christ had released him from the prison of His sins. And now He has God's promise of Forgiveness. He is reminding the Philippians that though things look bleak, being in Christ means we can rejoice in God's promises. Blessed is the one who is not offended by me, "says Jesus

You see, Jesus was doing the blessing job of the Messiah right then and there. True not everything was getting fixed, but it was being made plain that God's kingdom was breaking in and the job would get done in due time. All the straightening out and tree chopping and grain gathering and separating and all the healing and dead raising there is to do will take place in due time. Patience, patience, patience. It can be tough but that is the way it is. If Jesus does the key parts of the messiah, you can be assured He will do the rest. No one needs to look for someone else.

And the good news is all this will come to pass, and Jesus has already assured that it will!

And He did by suffering unjustly, by being the most righteous one allowed himself to be tried in an unfair trial, and being crucified on the cross. He did all this for you and for John the Baptist and for all the perplexed people. All the sins and all the wrongs of this world are paid for by Jesus. By Jesus holy blood on the cross. Now all your worries and all your fears and all your sins have a place to go to find the answer. The cross of Christ/ This assures you that there is ultimate hope and remedy for God's oppressed. As burst forth from the tomb on Easter, he will call us forth from the grave and prisons we build for ourselves when he comes again. Not today, but then again it could be today. Who knows? We do not know. But we do he is coming again. And he will set everything right.

Are you the one who was to come, or should we look for another? No you do not need to look for another. You do not need to look no further than Jesus. He did not come looking for perfect people, He was indeed a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Yes, Jesus came looking for people just like you and me. For the Son of Man came to save the lost. If that describes you then you are in good shape. He has found you right where you are.

And too, by worldly standards, Jesus said, "Of those born of woman none is greater than John

the Baptist.” That means, that politicians who are full of themselves, and even pastor who feel the church can’t get along without them, John is greater than you and all of you put together. For whoever is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.” In other words the one to whom Jesus comes, the one to whom Jesus a child of God is greater than anything than this world has to offer.

Jesus came to you in baptism and made you His child. Jesus comes to you in forgiveness. Jesus is coming to you in the Word. Jesus comes to you when two or three are gathered in His name. Jesus comes to you faithful in due time to take you to the His heavenly home when you die on this earth.

In the midst of disappointments, in the midst of bewilderment, we can sing today with joy. We can go to the sick rooms, hospitals, and nursing homes, to our hurting and troubled friends and neighbors, when things are not working as planned, and point the God who has not forsaken them in through His Son Jesus Christ.

Zephaniah rejoiced, Paul rejoiced, John I believe rejoiced too, and you too. What they did you do too. Blessed is the one to whom Christ draws near.