

Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

December 15, 2024

Are You The One?

Advent 2024

Matthew 11:1-11

KEY VERSES

Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities. ²When John heard in prison what the Messiah^[a] was doing, he sent word by his^[b] disciples ³and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" ⁴Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." ⁷As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸What, then, did you go out to see? Someone^[c] dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet?^[d] Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is the one about whom it is written,

'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.'

¹¹"Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

In a study of flourishing people, conducted by Covenant friend and Anglican pastor Brian Wallace, he found the following patterns: 1) flexible habits, 2) deep friendships, 3) regular retreats, and 4) hopeful expectation. **How do you see your own habits in each of these? Which is easy, and which is more difficult for you?**

Even if hopeful expectation does not come naturally to us, it can be cultivated. We are a forgetful people who do not like looking back, as the prophet Isaiah has reminded us. In this passage, we see John in prison awaiting execution, akin to our recent journey with Paul who awaited the same fate. It's important to note what John the Baptist is focused on at the end of his life: he sends his disciples to find out from Jesus if He is actually THE one. Sometimes it's easier to trust other influences in our lives and not believe that Jesus is actually Lord over ALL.

Do you believe Jesus is the ONE? Why is it hard for us to place all our faith in Him?

In Jesus' typical style, He does not give a clear answer to this question. Instead, He names these seven miracles to be reported back to John:

- 1) Blind receive sight
- 2) Lame walk

- 3) Skin diseases cleansed
- 4) Deaf hear
- 5) Dead raised
- 6) Poor have good news brought to them
- 7) Blessed are those who take no offense to Jesus

Consider how the first five are different than the last two. In number six, being poor during this time of the temple system meant that God could not be real to those without money - hence Jesus' anger as He turned over the temple tables. **How is number six also a miracle to those who can feel a sense of belonging after a lifetime of feeling like they did not fit in?**

In the case of number seven, anyone who calls on the name of Jesus is blessed. For those of us who have wrestled with a lifetime of sin, to be blessed simply by claiming Jesus is a true miracle indeed! **How is number seven a miracle in your own life?**

To understand why Jesus' answer involves miracles, we must look both backwards and forwards. Jesus looks back to the way creation was at the beginning, with a desire to restore it to the way it was before the fall. In looking forward, He foreshadows what heaven will be - a place of no sickness, pain, or disparity. These miracles answer John's question that Jesus is indeed the ONE, because Jesus does what only the Messiah can do - restore creation and foreshadow what heaven will be like. **For us, the way to cultivate hopeful expectation is to look back - where have you seen sickness cured, relationships healed, and dignity restored? Knowing we can never do enough to purify ourselves is a relief and cause for celebration. Thinking about how God has shown up in your own life, let yourself sit in the question especially during this Advent season: I wonder what God will do next in my life?**