

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

A Message of Hope and Fulfillment For Those Longing For God

Exceptions Do Not Measure a Life

Luke 7: 18-35

Last time we specifically considered expectations and experiences that bring doubt into our lives. Often we have formed an inaccurate view of God, and when He does not behave according to our model, our expectations, we find ourselves doubting His goodness, or even His existence. Today we will consider ways to deal with doubt and recognize the truth that weak moments do not define great lives. The measure of a person must be taken from the broad strokes, not the exceptions.

I. Responding to Doubts (vv. 18-23)

- A. Direct claims are seldom satisfying, platitudes are ineffective, flippant slogans bring no comfort, and other people, however well-intentioned, cannot satisfy your soul.
- B. Jesus pointed John to the evidence in Scripture and allowed the Holy Spirit to drive home the truth; then He offered him a blessing (v.23).
- C. The key to the revival of faith and the affirmation of truth is found in the timeless Word of God, empowered and applied by the Holy Spirit. Cultivate the habit of turning to the Bible when you have lost your way and have lost sight of God.

II. John's True Nature & A Lesson in Grace (vv.24-28)

- A. When people disappoint us, there is a tendency to evaluate their lives in terms of the failure, the exception, rather than their history.
- B. Jesus gives perspective on John's life and character (vv.24-28)
- C. Without compromising truth, we always need to view one another in terms of the whole picture and a good measure of grace: everyone has low moments, and some people have exceptional failures.

III. The Marvelous Benefits of the Kingdom and Our Great Privilege (vv.28-30)

- A. John stands at the pinnacle of all the Old Testament prophets and heralds of God's promises; he is the greatest of the great messengers throughout Israel's history.
- B. But he was the last of an era that fell just short of the marvelous grace of the Gospel and the blessing of the new birth and the new covenant.
- C. The least person in the Kingdom of God begins in a new era that far supersedes the benefits and privileges of the old covenant heroes: for this John paved the way, but Jesus brought the Kingdom.

John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'" At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why don't intellectual arguments satisfy the heart and soul?
2. How can you help someone who is struggling in a period of doubt and confusion?
3. How should we treat one another in times of failure or wavering faith?
4. What did Jesus do to counter the judgment of the disciples that perhaps John was a traitor and failure after all?
5. How do you view yourself as a Kingdom citizen?
6. What should you say to someone who is questioning the goodness of God, or even wondering about His existence?

NOTES

man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: “‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’”

I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” (All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)

Jesus went on to say, “To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other:

“‘We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry.’”

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say,

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