

**The One Has Come** (Luke 7:18-35)

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I am especially grateful for the passage of Scripture we're considering together this morning.

Now, it's not uncommon for me to be filled with gratitude for the promises and stories and wonderful things I find in the pages of my Bible. That's kind of the point -- this is, I believe, God's Word written down for me and for you that we might learn about Him, get to know Him, better understand Him, and even come to love Him.

But that journey, that process of growing in our knowledge and love of God has its ups and downs, its highs and lows. We experience seasons of rich faith and deep connection with the Lord...and, at times, we experience moments...or, sometimes even long and difficult periods...of doubt.

Let's be honest: sometimes it is hard to believe in the promises of God. Our confidence in Him gets shaken because as we look at our lives or the world around us, we begin to feel that something just doesn't add up. If God is who He says He is...shouldn't the world be different? Shouldn't it be a better place? We all have hopes and dreams and expectations of what God could do, and sometimes we allow those to grow into assumptions of what God should do.

And that tension between what we think God ought to be like and what he ought to be doing and the reality of what we often experience in this sinful, fallen, broken, hurtful world...in that tension we find uncertainty...and confusion...and doubt.

The good news is that our doubt does not surprise God. And it doesn't drive Him away from us, either. I am grateful for this passage because in these 18 verses we get to see Jesus engage people who are struggling in their faith and aren't sure what to believe. Some bring their doubts before Jesus. Others allow their doubts to lead them away. In both scenarios, Jesus offers the same solution, the same affirmation and invitation to all who struggle to uncertainty. He tells them:

**I am the One who has come. I am the God's promised Savior of the world.**

**You can trust me. You can follow me. You can do right by believing in me.**

My hope this morning is whether you came here full of confidence or desperate from doubt, you will be encouraged and assured that **Jesus is the One, our Savior, who you can trust, follow, and do right by believing in.**

So, let's see what the Lord has for us in this Word today.

**(Jesus is the One: Trust Him)**

*18 John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, 19 he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" 20 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?'"*

Luke 7

The "John" mentioned here in v18 was a man known as John the Baptist.

John had devoted his entire life to getting people ready to meet Jesus. Earlier in the Gospel of Luke we learn that before John was even born he was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit in order to accomplish a lifetime of prophetic, preparatory tasks. As he grew up and became a man, he went out into the wilderness of Judea and began a ministry of preaching, calling

people to confess their sins and change their lives, and to be baptized in the waters of the Jordan River. John was so influential that people began to wonder if he could be the Messiah, the deliverer God had promised to send into the world. John made it crystal clear, however, that he was not the Messiah. Instead, he was the one given the honor, privilege, and responsibility of preparing the way for the Messiah, so that people would be ready to meet and listen to him when he arrived. On what had to be one of the most amazing days of John's life, he met Jesus in the waters of the river, declared Jesus to be *"the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world"*, and baptized Jesus -- an act that was immediately followed by the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus and the voice of God booming out from heaven, declaring to Jesus, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22).

John had told people that Jesus would come in the power of the Holy Spirit, that he would change the world forever. John had expected Jesus to defeat Israel's enemies, to reform the religious institutions, and to condemn corruption. He said Jesus would have *"winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire"* (Luke 3:11-12). (The wheat collected being the people on the side of God and Jesus and John, the chaff burned away being those who opposed God, such as the Romans or certain religious leaders of the day).

John was a passionate preacher for and supporter of Jesus. So...how did he go from being Jesus' right hand man to asking the haunting, desperate question, *"Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"*

The simple answer is things had not gone how John had hoped they would or expected. In vv18-19, we're told John's disciples had to tell him about what Jesus was up to, and then John had to send a few of them to find Jesus and ask his question. That's because it was impossible for John to go anywhere or do anything. Back in Luke 3 we learn that John gets arrested for calling out the immoral behavior of one of Israel's corrupt rulers.

And so it was that John the Baptist, herald of Jesus the Messiah...found himself behind walls of stone and bars of iron, trying to understand the reports about Jesus' amazing yet unexpected behavior and ministry. Yes, Jesus surely was powerful -- he had healed the sick, freed the demon possessed, made heads spin and hearts burn with his teaching and preaching, and he had even raised someone from the dead...but why hadn't he done anything to change the way the world works? Why hadn't he freed Israel? For that matter, why hasn't he at least freed John?

So, from the gloom of his cell, through the help of his messengers, John asks Jesus: *"Did I get it all right, or did I get it all wrong? Can I really trust you? Can I really put my hope in you? Are you the one who is to come, or should I start all over and look for someone else?"*

Have you ever wanted to ask God a question like John's? Because I'll tell you the truth, I absolutely have. I've called out to the Lord at different times in my life, wondering about my circumstances and struggling with my doubts. I've looked around me and wondered, *"Is Jesus really doing something here, in my life and on this earth...or do I need to start believing in someone or something else? Is it safe for me to put me trust in him?"*

What I want to be sure you all notice is how Jesus responds to John's question. He doesn't get angry. He doesn't condemn John for his doubt. He doesn't take offense or turn his back on his struggling, weary, disheartened friend. Instead he sends John's messengers back with an answer of both evidence and invitation. He tells John, *"look at all I've done, look at all I'm doing...and trust me."*

*21 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. 22 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. 23 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."*

Luke 7

Jesus, in the moment that John and his disciples need it most, performs miracles of healing and compassion before their very eyes. He then specifically tells them to go back and tell John what they've seen and heard, packing his response with an overwhelming tidal wave of prophetic fulfillment of promises of what the Messiah would be like and do from the Book of Isaiah. Jesus is putting his answer to their question on display, and that answer is crystal clear: *"Yes, I am the one who has come. I am the Savior. Look for no other: I'm the One John, and indeed the whole world has been waiting for."*

But what I most want to draw your attention to is Jesus' words in v23: *"Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."*

This is a reference to Isaiah 8. Where God tells the prophet Isaiah not to stumble and follow the ways or opinions of the ones who reject Him, but instead reminds and promises Isaiah, *"The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy"* (Isaiah 8:13).

And in response to this reminder, this invitation to remember what is true and good and wonderful about God, Isaiah says, *"I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the descendants of Jacob. I will put my trust in Him."* (Isaiah 8:17).

Jesus tells John, "I know what I'm doing, and how I'm going about work isn't what you expected and doesn't make sense to you, but I need you to remember that I am the One. I am One with the Father Almighty. I am One with the Holy Spirit. We've got a plan. I need you to trust me."

That same message is offered to you, too. You may not understand what God is up to. You may look around at your life, or the world around you, and tell God, "this isn't what I expected when I heard about you, or when I decided to follow you." You may want to ask, "Are you really the One I've been looking for?"

John was told to look at the evidence of Christ's work up to that time. We are told something similar. We too should look at the evidence of Jesus in our life. When have you felt his presence? How many times has someone come to your side, at just the right time, with an encouraging word in the spirit of Christlike love? Perhaps you've experienced something miraculous in your life, something that can only be explained by the grace and power of the Almighty God.

All these, and more, are given to us so we may remember, and in remembering, be sure of God's concern and care for us. But, we by God's grace have something even more amazing to consider: we have the completed work of Christ. The Gospel is Jesus' invitation to see his life, death, and resurrection as a fulfillment of all that was promised and a reason, THE reason to trust Jesus with our lives, forever.

Are you willing to bring your doubts to Jesus? And if you do, will you consider the evidence of His love for you, his life sacrificed for you, the salvation of his resurrection made available to you...if you trust him?

Jesus is the One who has come. He is the Savior. His response to your doubt is an invitation: please, come and trust him.

### **(Jesus is the One: Follow Him)**

After John's disciples leave, Jesus then turns to the crowds that had gathered around him.

There were many in the crowd that had known John the Baptist. They'd trekked out into the wilderness to see him, to hear him preach, and had been impressed by the power of his ministry and the strength of his conviction. Jesus takes a moment to affirm that it was good that they had sought John and listened to his message:

24 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? 25 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. 26 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is the one about whom it is written:

*"I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way before you."*

28 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."

Luke 7

John wasn't a senseless hermit, and he wasn't a man of earthly power or prestige. He was, according to Jesus, the greatest man to have walked the earth and a prophet specifically commissioned to get people ready to meet the Messiah. John prepared the way. He got hearts and minds and souls ready to meet the coming Savior.

And yet...I have to imagine that these people were now a little unsure as to what to do next. John was in prison. They'd figured out that this Jesus guy seemed to be the "next man up"...but what, exactly did that mean?

Jesus makes it clear in v28. On this earth there was no one greater than John. But the time to follow John had come to an end. It was now time for everyone to take the next steps, and enter into the Kingdom of God. **It was time to follow Jesus.**

It is terribly popular these days to dabble in a variety of competing things that all claim to be true. We mix a little Christianity with a dash of self-help and self-improvement, toss in some wisdom from social media influencers, modern philosophers, skeptics, deconstructionists, men and women from other religions who all say nice that sound good and right...and what we get in the end is a jumbled and directionless and powerless mess.

I believe we can and should listen to, learn from, and have great conversations with people from all walks of life and differing spiritual backgrounds. But I also believe that when all is said and done, if Jesus truly is the One who has come to save us and bring us into the eternal presence of God...then we **must commit ourselves wholly to following him**. There can be no other. He will not share space in our hearts with any rival.

There is no wisdom on earth, no person you can follow, no achievement you can reach or greatness you attain that even comes close to the goodness and the greatness and the absolute wonder of being in the presence of God in the Kingdom of God. And we're told, again and again, in no uncertain terms, that there is one way to enter this glorious Kingdom: through Jesus, the One who has come. We must follow him.

### **(Jesus is the One: Do Right by Believing in Him)**

The last group Jesus addresses in this passage are those who considered all Jesus had done and was doing...and decided it wasn't enough. He didn't meet enough of their expectations. He didn't play by their rules. He didn't dance to their tune. So, instead of turning to him, trusting him, or following him...they reject him, and the results of doing so are shocking.

29 (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. 30 But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)

31 Jesus went on to say, "To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? 32 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."*

33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' 34 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' 35 But wisdom is proved right by all her children."

Luke 7

The ones who have the hardest time understanding who Jesus is are the ones who should have been the most ready to receive him. The Pharisees and the experts of the law were religious professionals! It was their job, their day-to-day gig, to ponder the mysteries of God and ready themselves for his coming Messiah.

But Luke tells us it was all imperfect people -- even the sinful, immoral, traitorous tax collectors -- who "*acknowledged that God's way was right*", accepted the challenge to repentance of John's baptism, and listened to Jesus's invitation to trust and follow him.

Meanwhile the Pharisees and the experts of the law, too concerned with their own expectations, reject Jesus and in so doing "*rejected God's purpose for themselves.*" By refusing to believe in Jesus they missed out on the very thing, the very One, who could have given them purpose and righteousness and life abundantly.

Jesus compares "this generation" to little children sitting in the marketplace who heckle and mock those who refuse to play their games. John the Baptist came to them with purpose and piety...they accused him of being possessed by a demon. Jesus came to them lighthearted and loving and welcoming...they called him a glutton, irreligious, and a friend to the worst sorts of people.

They decided to embrace and follow their doubt because Jesus just didn't fit what they wanted out of a Savior. They wanted a conqueror. They wanted an earthly king. They wanted what they thought was more than what Jesus had to offer.

But there is nothing in heaven or on earth more than what Jesus has to offer. You can do no better, and be no more right, than to trust him, follow him, and believe in him.

***What is one promise from God that you can choose to trust this week? What does He say is true about himself, or about you, or about your circumstances that you need to accept based on His evidence, invitation, and in faith?***

***What is one way you can follow him more closely, either taking up a new practice or humbly letting go of something that stands between you and a closer relationship with Him?***

***What might it take for you to believe, either for the first time or as a reaffirmation, that Jesus really is the One, the Savior, who has come in love to save you?***

Jesus is the One. He is the Savior. I hope you'll take seriously and gladly accept His invitation to trust Him, follow Him, and live rightly by believing Him.