

12/13/09

**THE PRAYER FOR THE DAY** Almighty God, you once called John the Baptist to give witness to the coming of your Son and to prepare his way. Grant us, your people, the wisdom to see your purpose today and the openness to hear your will, that we may witness to Christ's coming and so prepare His way; through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON**

**Psalm 85**

- 1 For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm. You showed favor to your land, O LORD; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
- 2 You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins.
- 3 You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.
- 4 Restore us again, O God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us.
- 5 Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
- 6 Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?
- 7 Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.
- 8 I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints-- but let them not return to folly.
- 9 Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.
- 10 Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
- 11 Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven.
- 12 The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest.
- 13 Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

**THE EPISTLE LESSON** Philippians 4:4–7

*(Rejoice! The Lord is at hand!)*

- 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**THE GOSPEL LESSON** Luke 7:18–28

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*(Jesus explains that John the Baptist is the promised messenger to prepare the way for the Messiah.)*

- 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 was 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 was to come, or should we expect someone else?'" 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 cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.** 23 **Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.**"

24 After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert 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.**"

**The Sermon**  
**7**

**“Waiting and Anticipation – Listening to the Truth”**

**Luke**

INTRO - I heard a conversation between 3 young people yesterday. They were talking about taking their driving test, and about drivers' education and the lessons being taught. It sounded somewhat like my memory. I went to drivers' ed expecting to learn how to drive a car. First, however, I ended up hearing about danger, accidents, and responsibility. It wasn't what I was expecting to hear. I'm not sure it's what I wanted to hear. But, it was the truth, whether I wanted to hear it or not.

- I. That seems to be the situation in Jesus' ministry that we see in today's lesson.
  - A. Jesus was not the kind of Messiah that the people of Israel expected.
    1. Part of the Old Testament prophecies talk about restoring the Kingdom and bringing glory to God's people. The Jews of Jesus' day expected a military conqueror that would bring glory to Israel and to its people. Instead Jesus called them to a spiritual kingdom.
    2. But in the chapter before our lesson today Jesus proclaims Luke's version of Jesus' teaching, sharing much of what was said in Matthew's account of the sermon on the mount. This wasn't about conquest and glory.
    3. Jesus wasn't pointing at the sin of others, but their sin, He asked, "Why look at speck in another's eye when you have a log in yours?"
    4. Jesus wasn't making their lives easier through military conquest, he was calling them to the difficult tasks of God's kingdom. "Love your enemy. . . Do not judge others, unless you want to be judged yourselves.
  - B. That is why John sends his disciples asking the question, "**Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?**"
    1. Some think this was John's question because Jesus wasn't what was he expected.
    2. Others, remembering that John pointed others to Jesus saying, "**Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,**" think that John knew Jesus was the Messiah, but John also knew his disciples had doubts. So He sent them to learn about Jesus and God's kingdom.
    3. Either way, Jesus was different than expected and people weren't sure if they should believe in Him. In fact, they weren't sure if they WANTED to believe in him.
  - C. Jesus had a plain answer. "**Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. 23 Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.**"
    1. Since Jesus' teachings in chapter 6, Jesus had healed the centurion's servant. He had raised the dead man at Nain.
    2. You see, had been performing the signs promised in the Old Testament of the Messiah.
    3. Jesus was and is the promised Messiah.
    4. His teaching was true and his call to a life lived for God was the right message, even if his message wasn't what they wanted to hear and even if they didn't want to believe it.
- II. Today is December 13, only 11 shopping days till Christmas. You've seen those signs. They used to appear at the top of each day's paper. We are in the last 2 weeks of preparing for Christmas.
  - A. There are voices in the world around us calling us to prepare for the celebration.
    1. We are told of snow and snow men.
    2. We are told of trees and gifts. We are encouraged to buy.
    3. Some want us to show tolerance and use the word holidays instead of Christmas.

4. Actually, the Christmas celebration can be a time of joy.
- B. But, Christmas is more than the celebration. Christmas is about the the birth and coming of God's Son, the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.
1. Getting ready for God to come is different than preparing for a winter holiday.
  2. Jesus comes as the Holy Son of God to save people from their sins.
  3. Jesus comes calling us to prepare our hearts, not just our living rooms.
  4. Jesus comes calling people to repentance for sin.
  5. He comes calling for worship of God and His glory, not our own.
- C. No wonder our self absorbed world doesn't want to hear about Christ, and wants us to change the name of the occasion to the winter holidays.
1. But, even if hearing about Jesus shocks our world, or brings us to a sudden halt and surprise, this is the truth.
  2. Guess what, Christmas is about Christ, the son of God, the Savior of the world, who came to call us to repentance and save us from our sins by His dying and rising.

III. Sometimes our expectations can be shocked in another way. In recent years I have heard of two real stories where a man and a woman went on a date, but, without the woman knowing it, the man had brought along an engagement ring. It was a happy occasion for all. Actually, the evening turned out even better than expected.

A Did you hear Jesus' words to his disciples, **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."**

1. The bottom line is that the Jews may have expected the Messiah to bring military conquest and earthly blessings. Jesus brought so much more.
  2. Yes, John is the greatest man that ever lived on this earth, according to Jesus. After all he was God's appointed prophet to prepare the way for the Messiah.
  3. But, Jesus has the righteousness of heaven, the joy of heaven, the blessings of heaven waiting for those who hear what he has to say, and receive Him in faith as Savior.
- B. John's glory was in this world, and so his disciples followed this righteous man. But Jesus' blessings are eternal, and bring God's blessings into our life.
1. So, because Jesus is the Messiah, we prepare, not for the celebration, but the reason for the celebration.
  2. We prepare seeking God's help for repentance, for faith, for love.
  3. God blesses us with His joy and peace.

CONCLUSION - Yesterday the evangelism board ran a table at the Colony Christmas. We were trying to raise some money to pay for the Christmas mailing that invites people to our Christmas worship and shares Jesus with our community. The mailing costs about \$1800.00. But, we weren't sure how it would go. I heard hopes that we might raise \$500 or \$600.00 of the cost. People of St. John were generous with their donations, and at the end of the day we had raised about \$1200.00, much better than we expected. When people prepare, not just for the holiday, but for the coming of the Christ, the joy and peace and blessings are more than we can imagine.