

## ***“Are You the One?”***

“Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” What a strange question – especially since it comes from none other than John the Baptist. After all, he should know ..... right?

John is the forerunner of the Christ – the one who prepares the way of the Lord. He has spent his whole life pointing to Jesus as the Christ. While still in the womb, he leaps when Jesus the Christ comes to his house. From his birth, his life is dedicated to the task of preparing the way of the Lord.

He’s no “reed shaken by the wind.” He’s not dressed in soft clothing – he’s dressed like the prophet Elijah. He’s out in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there, in the midst of the crowds, he points to Jesus as He draws near – and in no uncertain terms – cries out, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

That’s why it’s so strange to hear him ask the question – “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” It’s so strange that – rather than take this text at face value – some people conclude that John must be asking this question for the benefit of his own disciples, or for the crowds – anyone, but John himself.

But he’s the one who asks the question, and sends disciples to get the answer. Which leaves us sitting here scratching our heads and wondering, how can this be?

Remember where John is when he asks the question. He’s in jail. He’s in jail because he faithfully called King Herod and Herodias to repentance for their adultery – and they didn’t like that one bit.

John takes his divinely ordained ministry seriously. He’s been unwavering, and look where it has gotten him. There he sits in the dark dungeon of a jail – with plenty of time to ponder his life, and ponder Jesus. Maybe He isn’t the one that John expected. Regardless, he asks a very genuine question. “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”

The question is asked – and answered, in no uncertain terms. Not only is that a blessing for John and his disciples and the crowds gathered around Jesus – but it is a blessing for us today.

Right then and there, Jesus healed people of their diseases, gave sight to the blind, made the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, cleansed the lepers, raised the dead, and preached good news to the poor. And then Jesus sends the two disciples back to John so that they can report to him what they have seen and heard.

What is reported to John, he has heard before. In days of old, Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would heal people, raise people from the dead, and bring good news to the poor. There is to be no doubt about it – Jesus is the Messiah who is to come.

But there is a strange twist in this messianic prophecy announced to John, something's missing. Isaiah also said that the Messiah would “proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.” (Is. 61:1)

And there he sits, in prison. Jesus doesn't come and open the doors of the prison – He doesn't promise to come and release him at a later time. John remains in prison – not receiving what he expected. Instead, Jesus says to him – “Blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

Here you sit – no, not in prison – but with your own bondage and your own jail cells. You too have been faithful. Your life has been devoted to Jesus. You've been His disciple from the day of your baptism. But there you sit.

Jesus, my whole life I've \_\_\_\_\_ (and you can fill in the blank). Yet, there you sit with your cancer – with your loved one dying – with the chaos and brokenness in your family. Yes, Jesus preaches the good news to you again today – but where is the opening of your prison? Is this what you expected? The question isn't so strange, is it? Jesus, “are you the One who is to come or shall we look for another?”

It shakes the child of God to the core when they have doubts, when they sit in the darkness of despair. It's tempting to look for another savior who will give you the earthly, temporal release that you desire. And the devil is quick to suggest to you that Jesus doesn't really care about you – that you would be better off to look elsewhere.

What a blessing to sit with John in prison today and hear and see what Jesus is up to. He does give you your daily bread, as He promises – everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body. But, like John – He doesn't promise to come and open the prison doors for you.

Instead, He says to you today – “Blessed is the one who is not offended by me.” Don't be offended that Jesus doesn't heal your cancer or raise you loved one to life today. Blessed are you when you see and believe that Jesus has come to take care of the root cause of all blindness, deafness, death, brokenness and bondage.

Behold, He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world – who takes away your sin! He sheds His blood to release you from the bondage of sin. He gives His life to destroy your death. He is raised to life again, so that you can be confident in His promise to resurrect your body to the life everlasting.

Poor John remains in prison – but Jesus has preached good news to him. Yes, he will die at the hand of Herod – but the hand of God will raise him to life. Already now, John is set free to trust this Jesus – even while sitting in his prison.

That is the good news that Jesus preaches to you today. He comes to you in your prison – giving His resurrected and ever-living Body and Blood to you – a guarantee that your body shall live eternally. He sets you free from the guilt and shame of sin – releasing the burden of sin – even while sitting in your prison.

No, Jesus doesn't always say and do what we expect – but it is without question that He is the One. He is your Savior. He is your resurrection and life. He is the One who comes to you today – forgiving all your sin and setting you free – and promising, “Blessed is the one who is not offended by me.” Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.