

Pastor Jon's Sermon from the 3rd Sunday in Advent 2022

Text: Matthew 11:2-11.

“What do people hear about you?”

In our Gospel for today, John the Baptist is sitting in King Herod's prison awaiting his future. He had questions and doubts himself about Jesus. He heard what Jesus was doing in his public ministry and wanted to know if Jesus was the true Messiah. He told his disciples to go and ask Jesus about this. Perhaps John was wondering if his work on earth was in vain or if he hit the mark. Could he rest in the fact that the one he was preparing the world for was in fact Jesus... as he suspected?

It makes me wonder, what are people hearing about you?

So John sent his disciples to see Jesus and ask “Are you the one?” Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

In Jesus answer, many scholars believe that Jesus is referring to Isaiah 35:5-6 “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.” And Isaiah 61:1 says, “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners.”

Jesus is telling John's disciples that he is the fulfillment of these scriptures. That the Messiah is a healer instead of a military commander. Jesus blew the expectations of the Messiah out of the water. They expected someone to come with military might and kick the Roman Empire out. But instead, God is opening a new age through the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus where even the little ones, the children, the poor, the meek, those who mourn, the persecuted who believe in Jesus will be of equal standing to someone the stature of John the Baptist. Even the least in the kingdom will be greater than John. This is a great reversal to the power structures of the day.

The bottom line is that here are people out there who rejected Jesus as the Messiah and there still are today. But Jesus says, "Blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

What do you hear and see. You will know Jesus by his words and activity.

Isn't that the same for us? People know us by our activity... what we reveal on a day to day basis... by our words and deeds. I met a man today at the healing service at St. Paul's before their annual Christmas dinner, named John. John sat next to me. He was not afraid to speak Jesus' name to me. You could tell he was thankful. He showed me his cross and all his Christian rubber bracelets. He must have said Jesus 10 times in our conversation of meeting each other. During the service he reached out and grabbed my hand for the Lord's Prayer. Then during the healing, he asked for prayer for his feet that hurt. He worked as a cart corral person at Fleet Farm and needed his feet to feel good for his work. He was warm and friendly and a witness to our faith. I knew him by

his words and activity. He introduced me to his caregiver, Trina.

One more example. I did a baptism today for Luka Abeng Asante. A member of the family walked into the church with all the Christmas lights on and said, “This place is cool.” I would agree.

Then I heard a story from mom little 3 year old Mila Asante, big sister, who asked her mom recently, “What’s the name of the baby we celebrate at Christmas?” Jesus. Yeah, Jesus.

What we say and do matters. Jesus was known by his words and actions. His greatest act of all was showing far he was willing to go for us on the cross. His love for us and grace is unfathomable.

We will not always get our words and actions right. But God continues to call us to participate in the in-breaking kingdom that brings good news to the oppressed and to binds up the broken hearted... because that’s why Jesus came.

Amen!