

Third Sunday in Advent
“Straight from the mouth of God” Luke 7:22-23
December 15, 2024
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the Third Sunday in Advent is from our Gospel reading, Luke 7:22-23.

“²² Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that *the* blind see, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised, *the* poor have the gospel preached to them. ²³ And blessed is *he* who is not offended because of Me.”

So far the text...

Back when the TVs we watched were black and white, one of the shows I remember watching as a kid was Mister Ed – the talking horse. He would share his pearls of wisdom only with his owner Wilbur. Now though maybe it would be our fantasy that animals could talk to us, we know that isn’t possible with a horse, of course, of course!

Now Biblically speaking, with God all things are possible, as with Balaam’s donkey!

There is, of course, of course, an idiom in English “straight from the horse’s mouth” – meaning if you want the truth, you go to the original, reliable source and not trust mere hearsay. This idiom came about because when owners would sell their horses, they would not always disclose the true age of their horses. But one can examine a horse’s teeth and determine the age by the length of the tooth and general wearing of the teeth. That’s also where the idiom, “long in the tooth” comes from. As a horse ages, the gums recede and it appears that the tooth is longer than a younger horse.

And one more idiom, “Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth”. If someone gives you a horse for free, it’s considered somewhat rude to look at the horse’s mouth to see how old it is. So, if someone gives you a Christmas gift, you basically don’t ask how much it cost...

Well, John the Baptist, had a gift to give his disciples, and he wanted them to go straight to the source – Jesus. He wanted them to hear it from the mouth of Jesus- and examine His words, and believe and trust in Him. For Jesus wasn't selling horses, but He was giving His salvation. Blessed is he who isn't offended by Jesus, ...isn't offended by the gift Jesus is giving – Himself – who indeed is the Coming One!!

Why did John the Baptist send his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the Coming One, the Messiah? Was it because John was doubting? Well, Jesus Himself, affirms the strength of John's faith when He tells the crowd these words after John's disciples returned to him.

““What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 25 But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. 26 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is he of whom it is written:

**‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,
Who will prepare Your way before You.’**

28 For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist;

John was in prison precisely because he was not a reed shaken by the wind or was influenced by the luxuries of soft garments. Herod had put him there because John had preached the message of repentance even to this ruler. John said it was not lawful, but it was adulterous for him to marry Herodias, his brother's wife, for Phillip was still living.

John as we heard on Wednesday in the Advent service jumped for joy in the presence of Jesus even in the womb of his mother. He was filled with the Holy Spirit while in the womb.

And, of course, when John baptized Jesus, he was given the sign of the Holy Spirit descending upon Him like a dove to confirm that Jesus was the Messiah. So John then exclaimed, **“And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”**

John pointed Jesus out to His disciples on several occasions after he baptized Jesus and said, **““Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”**

No, it was not John who doubted, but other of his disciples. It seems that there jealousies among John's disciples. In John chapter 3, his disciples came to him saying, **"Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"** There was some crowd size comparison going on.

And we also hear in Matthew 11, John's disciples coming to Jesus and asking Him, **"14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?'"**

Later in Ephesus in Acts 19, after Jesus resurrection, Paul met 12 of John's disciples who had not united with the Church. They regarded John as their head, not Jesus and had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. This sect was performing a baptism which they claimed was a continuation of John's baptism, but in reality was no real baptism and thus they were baptized in the one true baptism, in the name of Jesus.

So back to our text, the disciples of John the Baptist, with their leader in prison, were confused. How could this be? So John sent them to hear from Jesus Himself.

When we hear strange things that don't seem Biblical, where do we go? Straight to the Bible. As Pastor Goetz pointed out on Wednesday, Elizabeth's Spirit filled song to Mary did not include "Mary, full of grace, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." Pope Pious IX declared this as dogma, that Mary was born without sin. In fact her "immaculate conception" was celebrated last week.

Of course, this is not Biblical and Mary herself, in her Spirit filled song, said **"my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."** For as a sinner, like all of us, she needed her soul saved by the Coming One she was carrying in her womb!

So, one always goes straight to the source, to the mouth of God, to Scripture itself to find the truth. As Hebrews chapter 1 tells us:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,"

That is the Good News – the Gospel, that Jesus has purged our sins by His death on the cross! This is what only Jesus could do. He was the Coming One and that is what Jesus told the disciples of John.

“Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that *the* blind see, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised, *the* poor have the gospel preached to them.

The One who created the universe, is the One who has come to us and showed His power by healing the people and raising the dead. Who can do that but Jesus? And the good news, the Gospel, is preached to the repentant, poor in spirit. It is preached to you and me today. The Gospel is God’s salvation for all sinners.

We receive this remission of sins in our baptism. For there is but one Faith, one Lord, one Baptism -in the name of the Triune God. And we receive this remission of sins in the Lord’s Supper today. His very body and blood are given , not mere symbols as others say. No straight from the mouth of God we hear Him say, “This is My body. This is my blood”.

And we like, John’s disciples are then sent to tell what we have seen and heard. John was not doubt joyful to hear his disciple testify to him of the truth. He himself was comforted while in jail, rejoicing at all times in his Savior, willing to be a martyr for Him.

Yes, you can certainly look this gift in the mouth of God...this Gospel of forgiveness...examine it for all it’s glorious beauty, rejoice in it... and proclaim it. It’s your gift to keep on giving!

Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)