

## “I Wonder” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Third Sunday in Advent – December 12, 2021

- I. **Luke 7:20** – And when the men had come to [Jesus], they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, ‘Are You the One who is to come, or shall we look for another?’”
- II. **Last week we talked about wandering**... this week we talk about wondering.
  - a. I wonder...
    - i. I wonder why the world is so full of heartache and loss.
    - ii. I wonder why we can’t trust people not to hurt us... to steal from us... to break our trust...to take advantage of our good nature.
    - iii. I wonder why people suffer with disease and pain...
    - iv. I wonder why some people suffer immensely, and others do pretty well.
      1. We get dealt a certain hand of cards – and we might feel like Job with all the horrible things that come our way, or maybe we feel very blessed with how life goes.
  - b. We wish it was different, but this time of year is often hard for people
    - i. Families don’t always get along
    - ii. Depression sets in – especially with the darkness and short days
    - iii. Not to mention the trouble with Covid and being separated and limiting our social interaction
    - iv. Some of us have experienced the loss of loved ones around this time, and seeing an empty chair at the table hurts
  - c. I wonder why God wants us to rejoice... when life hurts?
  - d. That’s a fair question – and certainly one that is raised by those without faith or an understanding of God and His plan of salvation.
- III. **Today in our Gospel lesson, John the Baptist is saying, “I wonder.”**
  - a. As I said last week, John the Baptist was born to prepare people for the coming of Jesus – as God sent the angel Gabriel to his dad Zechariah to announce the coming of the miracle baby John...who would prepare the way for Jesus the Messiah
  - b. So, John grows up and begins preaching the coming of Jesus – even getting the chance to baptize the Son of God in the Jordan River.
    - i. John heard the voice of God the Father from heaven saying to Jesus, “You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased...” (Luke 3:22) as the Holy Spirit came down on Him.
  - c. Pretty soon, Jesus was going all throughout what is called the Holy Land – doing miracles, raising the dead, commanding storms to stop, and healing people of all sorts of diseases, demonic possessions, and disabilities.
    - i. Actually, He had just healed a centurion’s servant – and commended the faith of a Roman outsider (the centurion) who wasn’t supposed to have a part in God’s saving grace like the Jews...

- ii. Jesus had also literally raised a dead man to life on his funeral bier... as the town was mourning the death of this destitute woman's son – Jesus brought him to life!
- d. These miracles were part of the stories going all throughout the land, and John the Baptist was hearing about them too.
  - i. But you know where John was?
    - 1. John was in prison because he criticized King Herod for marrying his brother's wife.
    - 2. John, the fire and brimstone preacher, was sitting in prison for speaking judgment and calling on all people to repent – even the king.
  - ii. It seems that John – who jumped for joy at the presence of Jesus – while he was still in his mother's womb... now was not so sure...
- e. Sure, the long-expected Messiah would bring blessings to the people of God, but John also saw the Christ as one who would bring judgment, justice... and punishment to all who were breaking God's law.
- f. And what was Jesus, the long-expected Messiah doing?
  - i. He was telling people to obey the Romans (who Jesus was supposed to deliver the Jewish people from under their rule!)
  - ii. He was telling prostitutes, thieves, and drunks that their sins were forgiven and to follow Him
  - iii. He was healing the blind... He was healing the deaf... He healed the disabled, lepers, demon possessed – and even raised the dead...
- g. As John sat in prison, do you think he wondered... how can Jesus be the Messiah when no one is receiving their due reward for sin and evil?
  - i. I wonder how come I'm in jail if Jesus is supposed to free the captives?
  - ii. I wonder how come I'm suffering if Jesus, the Savior, is here?
  - iii. I wonder why God is allowing me to struggle for doing right?
- h. So, John asked his followers to go ask Jesus to see what the answer was right from the source...
  - i. Jesus didn't answer really, but instead He showed them exactly what He was doing in the world – healing, restoring, and redeeming all things
  - ii. Just as He said in His hometown of Nazareth at the synagogue – He quoted Isaiah the prophet – saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” (Luke 4:18-19)

1. You might remember how that whole thing ended – His hometown people rejected Him, and ultimately tried to throw Him off a cliff!
  - i. Therein lies the struggle for all humanity – I wonder if Jesus is the one.
- IV. **Can we relate to John?**
- a. At least in part, do we sometimes wonder why all the hardship and struggle?
  - b. If God is real and we are His children, then how can He possibly let us suffer?
  - c. Some of us are in a prison of emotional turmoil – some of us in the prison of a painful past – of a trauma... of accidents... victims of the forces of evil
  - d. And we wonder, are You the Savior and Redeemer even when my life is in shambles? When I'm in a prison of pain and suffering?
  - e. Now, you might not be able to jump for joy as sin, death and the devil cause all sorts of suffering in your lives – but I am here to tell you, rejoice.
- V. **The God of the universe made an appearance in human flesh.**
- a. Some people may wonder... some people may reject on the basis of their suffering or the evil in the world – but it doesn't change the fact that God broke into the world to redeem and restore.
  - b. In a world that seems to constantly let us down, God is the only constant who never does.
    - i. Remember what Romans 8:18 says? “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
    - ii. And 1 Peter 5:10? “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”
    - iii. What about 1 Corinthians 15:57? “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
  - c. Once again, rejoice...
    - i. Celebrate the fact that all the Old Testament prophecies came true in Jesus Christ, the Son of God...
    - ii. Rejoice that in spite of our sin and places we cannot measure up to His standards...all that was cast upon Jesus on the cross...
    - iii. Be filled with gratitude that God chose to save us rather than let us perish... rather than giving up on the whole lot of us.
  - d. No doubt, sometimes sin, death and the devil get us down, but underlying all of that is a God who follows through with His promises to restore and redeem all things...
    - i. Will it be during your lifetime or mine? Perhaps... but whenever it comes, He will complete what He set out to do 2000 years ago.

- ii. The end of time is near, and rejoice that you are believer who doesn't have to wonder when – because Christ our Savior will come with great power and glory when the time is just right.
- e. Rejoice, praise and celebrate, because the Lord your God, Jesus Christ, won the battle over sin... over death... and over satan... so by faith in Him... we have too. Amen