

Grace and peace be with you all this day.

A young man had dreamed of being a computer wizard his whole life. He went to university, found an entry level job, and worked his way up from company to company. The work was not easy, the hours were long and at the start the pay was terrible. But with hard work, he became quite successful and became a high-ranking consultant within a large IT consulting firm. Life was good! But then one day, God came knocking. God told the man, now middle aged, to become a pastor. "What kind of insanity was this?" Thought the man. I have a house, a career, and a great life. The man resisted the call to God. However, the man worked through things and eventually agreed to become a pastor. When he told his parents, their neighbour thought he was crazy for even considering this. She had always despised God and the church and happily told him as much. Well, years later, the man went back home to preach, and who should come attend, but the neighbour who always had scoffed at God. The man preached from Matthew 11, about not being offended by God. She came and thanked him for the service after he preached. She even gave him a congratulations gift for becoming a pastor. She didn't take offence at the Gospel anymore.

I want to submit to you this day that "Blessed is those who are not offended because of who Jesus is." In Advent, we look to Saint John, who is a forerunner for the coming Messiah. He is the one who Isaiah 40 speaks of;

*3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness:*

*"Prepare the way of the Lord;*

*Make straight [a]in the desert*

*A highway for our God.*

*4 Every valley shall be exalted*

*And every mountain and hill brought low;*

*The crooked places shall be made [b]straight*

*And the rough places smooth;*

*5 The glory of the Lord shall be revealed,*

*And all flesh shall see it together;*

*For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."*

John is the one who previously was baptizing in the Jordan River, when Jesus came to him to be baptized of John, John says "I'm not worthy of baptizing you and it is you that should be baptizing me." And after the baptism

something like a dove is seen, and a voice is heard stating "This is my Beloved Son whom I am well pleased." John tells his followers that he must decrease, and Jesus must increase. Behold the Lamb of God who takes upon Himself the sins of this world, follow Him now! Sometime later, John is put in prison by Herod. In Matthew 14 we read that John the Baptist was placed in prison by Herod Antipas because of John condemning Herod for having divorced his wife and then having married Herodias, the divorced wife of Herod Antipas' half-brother Philip. John has now been sitting in prison for a while, and he is wondering why Jesus hasn't come to his rescue. John now sends two of his followers to Jesus to ask Him a question. Are you the one, or should we look for another?

Sometimes we think when God calls us into the ministry that all will be well and if something is wrong we can just pray about it and God will take it away, after all didn't the bible say if you have faith the size of a mustard seed you can move mountains, didn't the bible say ask and it shall be given, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be open, if you ask anything in my name it will be given to you.

I don't know about you, but I can relate to John, I've been in situation where I just knew God would come through, I knew He would make a way and I waited, and I waited, and I waited some more, but sometimes the answer doesn't come the way you think it should.

I remember in 2022 I was seeking help from the Lord about something that was so disturbing to my spirit, and I sought the Lord every day asking why and when are you going to fix it. I kept telling the Lord, "God I know you're able to do this and more than I can even ask or think, have mercy on me!" But I got no answer, and slowly I stopped asking. The problem was still there however, and one day the Lord just showed up and spoke to my spirit. He said He will never leave you nor forsake you, then He gave me my song in the night. When I was ready, I accepted my role and remembered that it is God who is in control of all things, not myself, and God came to my rescue.

But here John is in jail feeling abandoned by the one who said He has come to set the captives free. The question John asks is "are you the one or should we look for another?" How well you know that we all get a little discouraged sometimes. Jeramiah got discouraged and said he didn't want to preach anymore, Elijah got discouraged and wanted to die, David got

discouraged and at times he had to encourage himself. When God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son on the altar, the bible doesn't say He questioned God, "why you are asking me to take a child you promised me, are you sure, is there no other way?"

Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see, Bartemaeus is seeing and the lame man who was dropped thru the roof on a mat, grabbed his bed and is walking; the ten lepers are cleansed and the deaf man is hearing; the widow of Nain's son along with Jarius' daughter are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. Jesus didn't say "tell John I will be there between Monday and Sunday to talk to him or to deliver him out of there." He said "tell John the things you hear and see, you who are free, go tell a man in jail what you see and hear."

Jesus wanted to assure both John and his disciples that He was the Messiah. But He also reminded them that His power would be displayed mostly in humble acts of service, healing the sick, feeding the hunger and meeting individual needs, and not in spectacular displays of political deliverance. John no doubt thought like everyone else that Jesus would come in political power to deliver them from the Romans authority and powers. But the Lord is saying "I didn't come to deliver you with horses and swords, I didn't come to fight a physical battle, my battle is spiritual. I came to deliver you with a Cross and a Crown. I came to give my feet to the nails and my side to the spear, my back to the whip and my head to the crown of thorn, I came to give my life a ransom for many."

We might phrase John's question like this: "Jesus, why aren't You doing more? Why haven't you come to see me? I haven't stepped outside my calling; I was called to prepare the way and I've done that. You told me to preach, and I've done that too. It's me, it's me Lord in need of prayer!" Anybody here ever told the Lord "It's me, it's me, it's me oh Lord standing in the need of prayer. I'm not praying for my mother, or my father, or my sister or my brother; but it's me this time." It's one thing to pray for someone else who's going through something, but it's another thing when you look in the mirror and realize it's you in need of an answer.

"Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised

up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” In other words, although you're in jail, the blind are seeing, the lame are walking, the deaf can hear, the lepers are cleansed, and the good word of the gospel is preached to the poor, in other words, the work is still going on. You never know how long you will be working for the Lord, but when my time is up, I'm glad to know that the work will still be going on.

John ran his race, and he ran it well, he may not have witness the miracle of the blind man seeing or the deaf man hearing, he didn't see Lazarus raised from the dead, he wasn't there for the five loaves and two fish miracle, he wasn't there to see the demoniac man delivered, he wasn't there to see Peter walk on the water, and he didn't see the stone rolled away, but now he has an answer that will carry him to his eternal resting place until the day the Lord returns.

Back to the Gospel, then Jesus says something strange, he said “Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me: Jesus is saying, “Blessed is the person who doesn't get upset in how I run things!” You won't understand my ways! “Blessed is those who won't give up on me because the healing didn't come right away. Blessed is the person who don't get upset with God when things don't make sense! Blessed is the person who understands that He is the potter, and we are the clay! When the wheel keeps turning and you keep cutting some things away from me, Blessed is he who is not offended because of me. When you're asked to put something on the altar that you want to hold unto, don't be offended because of me. When you're looking for peace and I came with a sword in your home that divided your home, Blessed is he who is not offended. When people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say every evil thing against you because of Me. Blessed is he who is not offended because of me. When you're not like everyone else and you won't settle, and they throw you in the furnace of affliction call me Shadrach. Don't get offended because of me. When the heat is turned up hotter than before call me Meshach. When the flames burn everything out of you not like God, call me Abednego, don't get offended or stumble because of me. When I give you a thorn to keep you humble, and refuse to remove it, don't get offended because of me. If you would just endure hardness as a good soldier, your reward is in heaven waiting on you! Don't get weary in well doing!”

Things may not always go the way you expect it to, the Lord says, “but don’t get offended because of me.” Keep the faith. Remember your baptism. Love the Lord with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might, and on the last day when Jesus returns, he will call you to His side forever. Amen.