

Are you the Promised One?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 May 2023

Preacher: James Ross

[0 : 00] So perhaps if you have your Bible open, you can turn with me to Luke chapter 7, from verse 18 to 35, a question and answer session with Jesus to help us to answer the question, is Jesus the one? Is he the promised Savior? Luke's gospel and the time of Jesus is like our world in the sense that there are many opinions and many ideas about Jesus.

Even in our first seven chapters, we've seen some people recognize Jesus as Messiah and Son of God, whereas some people have called him a blasphemer and a false teacher.

Some are following him as their master, some see him as a prophet. So who is Jesus? Is he, as some say, a bad man, or is he a good man? Is he just a good man, or is he the God man?

And we come to Luke chapter 7, from verse 18 onwards, and I want us to imagine that we're being invited to a sit-down interview. There seems to be a growing trend, doesn't there, of those behind-the-scenes interviews, where you get to know the person behind the celebrity. Well, here, we have this question-and-answer session with the Lord Jesus. There are three questions that are asked that give us a chance to hear Jesus' thoughts, Jesus' thoughts on his ministry, so we can think about how did Jesus live. A question that helps us to think about the identity of Jesus, what's so important about his coming, and a question that takes us to attitudes towards Jesus, so we can ask ourselves, what is the right response, and more than that, what is my response to Jesus? On a weekend when many are asking, you know, what kind of king and what kind of kingdom can we look forward to, when we've seen in the news that people have made their decision about how to respond to the coronation of the king, how do we respond to this king, the king of kings? And do we recognize that this is a choice with eternal significance? So let's think, first of all, about the ministry of

Jesus. We find this in verses 18 to 23, and let's think about the question that comes, a question that comes from followers of John the Baptist in verse 19, are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else? Jesus, are you the promised saviour, or is there someone still coming? Isn't that a great question? Jesus, are you the one? Are you the saviour? Who are you? Maybe to help us to think about the question, we can just take a minute to think about, well, who is John the Baptist who's asking this question? So we've met him a few times in chapter 1, and we discover that he was chosen by God before he was ever born. He was chosen to be a prophet, to speak for God. Indeed, he had a particular job to be the messenger who would prepare for the Lord's coming. One verse to help us to remember that, this comes from the song of his father Zechariah, as John is born, and you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him.

[3 : 49] And then we meet John a number of years later in chapter 3, as he begins his public ministry. And we're told in chapter 3, verse 3, that John preaches a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. So he calls people to turn away from sin, to turn towards God, the sign of that to be baptism, to know forgiveness. And then he spoke to the crowds about a coming one, one who is far greater than him, one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. And then we also discover in John chapter 3 that John the Baptist is put in prison for speaking against the king, and he's still in prison now, so he can't come personally. So he sends some followers to ask the question of Jesus, are you the one? And we need to ask ourselves the question, what's going on when John wants that question to be asked? He has so powerfully and publicly spoken about Jesus as the one, so what's going on? I think the likely answer to this is that John the Baptist's patience has failed in some way.

Remember John said he'll baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He was expecting, I think, for Jesus to come and bring decisive judgment, to get rid of his enemies, to establish his kingdom now. You know, the disciples had those same thoughts as well, as we read the Gospels. For John the

Baptist, he was expecting the kingdom to come differently and to look differently, and so he wants to check in and to ask the question, Jesus, are you the one? Now we need to think about Jesus' answer and what Jesus' answer tells us about his ministry. So look at verse 21. At that very time, the very time that he's been asked the question, Jesus cured many who had diseases, illnesses, and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who are blind. What do we see here? We see that God's kingdom is coming, but it comes by mercy and not by the might of an army. We see that Jesus is the promised one, but he comes first as a compassionate Savior, one who brings good news of grace to the needy and the poor.

Yes, he will come as judge, but here he comes first as Savior, and he invites the followers of John, and he invites us to recognize that the miracles he performs are proof that he is the promised Savior.

As Jesus acts both with the power of God and the grace of God in order to transform people's lives, doing the work only God could do, whether that's dealing with blindness or disability of any kind, means the healing of infectious diseases. He is showing that he is God, and he is the God of mercy. And so he points them to the miracles, but he does more than that. He invites John and his listeners, and us as well, to think back, to think back to Old Testament promises.

[7 : 20] Jesus will fulfill those promises as proof. Because then in verse 22, he replied to the messengers, go back and report to John what you have seen and heard, the blind receive sight, and so on, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Why did we read Isaiah 35 this morning?

Isaiah chapter 35 anticipates this great day when God's promised one would bring salvation, when the glory of God would be revealed, when the Lord himself would come to save.

And these are the signs. These things that John, that Jesus is doing, these are the signs that God promised his Savior would perform. He has come to establish this highway of holiness, to lead his people back to God and to eternal life. And so Jesus is saying, I am the fulfillment of the great hopes of the Old Testament. And because of that, he is good news to the poor, the great hope of God's Word, the great hope for people.

We find it in the ministry of Jesus, the Savior. And so he sends the messengers away in verse 23, saying, blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me. You are blessed if you don't fall off this tree, if you don't fall into a trap, but if you recognize that in Jesus, God's King is here, and he's establishing his kingdom of mercy and grace for his blessing.

So in the spotlight, in this Q&A session with Jesus, is how did Jesus live? We often think, and we should often think, about how did Jesus die and why did Jesus die? But it's good for us to think about how did Jesus live? Because isn't it beautiful to see our Savior as he cared for ordinary people? Indeed, as he came like an ordinary person, didn't he? Born to a poor family, growing up in a small, unimportant time, working as a carpenter, didn't come with the robes of pomp and ceremony. He cared for and came as an ordinary person. And he loved, didn't he? He loved those the world often hated and ignored. So in Luke's gospel, we've seen him welcome tax collectors.

[10 : 09] We've seen him reach out and touch the despised leper. We've seen him honor the faith of an enemy centurion. We've seen him. We've seen him. We've seen him. We've seen him wait for his blessing.

And all the way along, as you watch the life of Jesus, you see grace and mercy shown to the undeserving, teaching us that his kingdom doesn't come. We don't enter the kingdom because we are worth it.

We come as we recognize, like the centurion last week, that we are not worthy, but that God is full of grace and love. And as we think about the way Jesus lived, we can understand that his love is revolutionary. It was utterly different and unique. It wasn't the way of the Jewish leaders, and it certainly wasn't the way of first century Rome. The pattern of the society around Jesus was that people who are powerful, they would use power selfishly. Perhaps we recognize that. The people that would get help would get help only if it was of benefit to me.

And the message was you cared for your own, you kept a distance, or you even hated your enemy. But what have we seen from Jesus? We have seen and heard him say, love your enemy.

We have seen and we have heard him speak of mercy to the least. We will see Jesus meet hatred with love. We will see in Jesus a Savior who saves by self-giving, loving sacrifice.

[12 : 07] We see the compassionate love of Jesus in the way that he lived. I read an article this week with a title that captured my attention. It said, Western society is Christ haunted. And what the author meant by that is that the values of Jesus are still with us in 21st century Scotland, even as so

many people don't recognize Jesus is Lord.

So the ideas and the values in our society that we take as common sense are only common sense, because Jesus has transformed the whole way that we look at the world.

I was walking past the quarter mile this week, and for the first time, walking past the old, the hospital there in the quarter mile, I saw an inscription on the side of the wall.

It's straight out of Matthew 25. I was sick, and ye visited me. Why is it that Christians throughout history have built hospitals?

Why is it that society believes in human rights for all people, and not just for the great and the good? Why is it that even when we struggle with our own economy, we still feel it is right to send international aid to countries that are struggling and suffering?

[13:44] Why do we believe that it is right to release slaves and to lift people out of poverty? These things are not instinctive and common sense.

They're common sense only because Jesus has transformed the way the world thinks.

Compassion, equality, justice, these are the values of Jesus.

And Christianity has shaped our world in thousands of wonderful ways, as the people of Jesus have sought to live like Jesus. And so even today, as so many people have no clue that Jesus is Lord, and they have no clue that Jesus has shaped our modern Western world.

It still remains true. Dick Lucas, who was a minister down in London, he said this, God did not give Christianity a watertight case.

He didn't send us a set of logical arguments. He gave us a watertight person. When we look at Jesus, don't we discover, here is one I can trust.

[15:00] Here is one who loves and who saves. And so we are invited to consider Jesus and to come to Jesus, to receive and to recognize in him there is a unique compassion and goodness and love and grace that we see in his way of life and in the way of his death as he dies on the cross.

Even there he is transforming. The cross, of course, was a symbol of Roman power, a way for Rome to humiliate enemies. Now that's not how people see the cross anymore, is it?

We think about the cross as a symbol of love, of sacrificial love, as God's demonstration of saving love, pouring out grace, giving us forgiveness.

So in the ministry of Jesus and in the sacrifice of Jesus, we have good news. Good news when we recognize that we are spiritually poor, that we by ourselves are unable to deal with our guilt and our shame, that we are unable to earn our way into God's kingdom.

There is good news to recognize Jesus, our compassionate Lord, has completed the work. And so the gospel of Jesus continues to be good news to the poor.

[16:30] Now let's move from the ministry of Jesus to think about the identity of Jesus. As you look here at verses 24 to 28, the next question in this Q&A; is a question that Jesus himself asks.

Verse 24, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about, John, what did you go out into the wilderness to see? By which he's inviting the crowds and us to ask the question, who is John?

And why does it matter? And I want us to see that to understand John and his ministry allows us to learn more about Jesus and his identity and ministry.

Jesus, of course, answers the question, who is John? What did you go out to see? In verse 26, what did you go out to see? A prophet. Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

You went out to see a man of strength and courage in his convictions, in his words. He wasn't like a reed swaying in the wind. You went out to see a man who lived as a prophet.

[17:42] He wasn't known for luxury as he enjoyed his desert experience. He looks and sounds like an Old Testament prophet. So why does Jesus say you went out to see more than a prophet?

He explains. It goes back to John's calling. Verse 27, this is the one about whom it is written, I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way before you.

So just as Malachi in the Old Testament anticipated, just as Zechariah in his song anticipated, John came to be the messenger preparing for the coming of the Lord.

So the whole Old Testament is anticipating when will the Redeemer come? Some people speak about the Old Testament as the age of promise because it's all looking forward to when the Redeemer and King would come.

Well, John is the last of the prophets in the age of promise because it's as if he gets to open the door and announce the King has come. Jesus, your Lord, is here.

[18 : 57] And that's the significance of verse 28. Jesus wants to give John great dignity. I tell you, among those born of women, there is no one greater than John, but he also wants to make plain that everybody after John enjoys a still greater privilege.

privilege. See there he says, yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. John lived in the age of promise.

Jesus says, for us who live in the age of fulfillment, there's something greater. There's greater privilege, and we're going to come back to that in a couple of minutes.

But let's think, how does John help us to understand who Jesus says? So, Jesus says he prepares people for the coming of the Lord.

So, Jesus is none other than God, who has become a man. Son of God enters into the world.

[20 : 03] And John is significant because he marks this change of era. Jesus can declare the kingdom of God has come. Why? Because Jesus is the king who's bringing in the kingdom.

John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus, what did he say? He said, behold, he said, everybody look.

Don't look at me, look at Jesus. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

In the ministry of John, he was preparing us for Jesus, the Lord, the Son of God, to die a sacrificial day as the way for our sins to be dealt with.

As he baptizes Jesus, what happens? There is that voice from heaven, you are my Son whom I love, with you I am well pleased. The ministry of Jesus bears witness to this reality that Jesus is God and Savior and the Father is delighted with him for carrying out his mission.

And as Jesus' popularity grew, John is the one who said he must increase and I must decrease.

Pointing people always to Jesus as the source of hope and salvation was John's calling.

[21 : 31] Let's come back to that idea, the least in the kingdom of God is greater. Before we move on, we need to think about this privilege that we enjoy. Three ways, I think, that we can think about our greater privilege.

The first, in the sense that we know the whole story. John was preparing people for the ministry of Jesus.

We have in the Bible the whole story, don't we, of Jesus' perfectly obedient life, of his completing the plan of God, in dying on the cross to save sinners.

We have the victory of Jesus displayed to the world at the resurrection. We have the return to glory where Jesus has received his coronation in heaven as King of Kings and we've been told that he'll be coming again to take his people to be with him.

So we have this privilege because of where we stand in our point in time in history that we can understand that God's plan to save his people, God's plan to live with his people comes to pass through Jesus.

[22 : 44] It's a great privilege. We're told that the Old Testament prophets, even the angels, longed to know what we can come to know in the Word of God and in the Gospel.

I also want to think about the sacraments. Today of all days, it seems good for us to recognize the privilege that we have, that Jesus has given the church both baptism and the Lord's Supper.

As two more ways that Jesus wants his church to hear good news, there is good news that in Jesus, God has made a way for our sin to be washed away, for us to be united to Christ.

That as we share the Lord's Supper as God's people, we are being taught and reminded that God saves by grace through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and that through that sacrificial death and through the life that comes to us, we enjoy fellowship with our God, through Jesus, and with the work of the Holy Spirit.

And that's the third privilege. Remember, John said that this coming one would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. But what John promised, the coming of the Spirit, the sending of the Spirit, that reality belongs to us as the church.

[24 : 14] When we have faith in Jesus, we are united to Christ by the Spirit. That the Spirit of God takes up residence within us.

that the power of the Spirit is at work in us, making us more like Jesus, causing us to want to glorify our God.

And so we have these wonderful privileges because of where we stand in history, in the age of fulfillment. And as is often said, with much privilege comes much responsibility.

John had a calling in his day, didn't he, to bear witness to Jesus as Lord. We, too, have that responsibility to bear witness to Jesus, the King of love and grace.

We have this responsibility to encourage one another by sharing the hope of the gospel together. And we have this responsibility as we seek that others might come to know the goodness of Jesus for themselves.

[25 : 20] Let's think lastly about the attitudes to Jesus. we find in verses 29 to 35. So we've sat in on this Q&A.; Jesus has been revealing truth about his life and his ministry, his identity and his mission, but now the focus moves out into the world.

We can say the focus moves towards our own hearts to consider attitudes and responses. there's a question in verse 31, to what then can I compare the people of this generation?

What are they like? Let's personalize that. What am I like in my response to the ministry of Jesus, to the mission of Jesus?

There are two options that are presented here. In verse 29, there's the way of the little people, all the people, even the tax collectors, or there's the way of the lawyers in verse 30.

So let's think about verse 29, these little people, all the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right because they'd been baptized by John.

[26 : 34] So there is a group who receive John's baptism gratefully. They knew they were sinners. They knew they needed repentance and forgiveness.

They were ready for John's ministry, they're ready to receive Jesus and his ministry and his message, to receive the good news that we are saved by grace, that good news comes to the poor and to the least.

But then there's the lawyers. We're told in verse 30, they rejected God's purposes for themselves because they'd not been baptized by John. They rejected God's purpose.

It's really significant that they ignored John and then ignored Jesus. This is a group of people who refused to admit that they needed to repent. We don't need John's baptism.

We can be good enough by ourselves, thanks very much. This is a group that refused to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, didn't see their needs. What of a Savior sent from heaven?

[27 : 37] To illustrate their attitude, there is this question then of who calls the tune in verses 31 and 32. Jesus paints a picture, a picture to show us Jewish leaders stubbornly rejecting God's message.

And the picture is like a group of sulking kids. They won't play the way I say they should play, so we're not happy.

They're not happy with John and they're not happy with Jesus. And the problem, they won't dance to their tune. The religious people, they disliked God's message as it came from John.

They disliked God's message as it comes from Jesus. What did they say about John? John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine. You say he is a demon.

John is too extreme. He's too extreme in his desert living. He's too extreme in his ministry calling people to admit that we're guilty sinners, that we need to turn back to God.

[28 : 45] It's too extreme and so they reject it. Jesus' ministry was quite different. The Son of Man came eating and drinking and you say here's a gluttoned and drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

What about Jesus? He's too extreme as well. Why? They love to keep themselves separate. We're better than them. We're on the right side. Jesus feasted.

with those regarded as bad and sinful. Inviting people into the kingdom of God by grace, not by merit and law keeping. Jesus is too extreme.

So John is rejected and Jesus is rejected. The purposes of God are rejected. The wisdom of God is rejected. Whenever we fail to receive this message from John that we need to turn away from sin, when we fail to receive the message of Jesus, that we need to be saved by him, by his grace.

Jesus says in verse 35, wisdom is proved right by all her children. The wisdom of God and the ministry of John and Jesus is seen by those with faith, but not by all.

[29 : 56] In this Q&A; session with Jesus, we can imagine Jesus turning the microphone out from him to us. What are you like today? What am I like today?

What is my attitude and my response to Jesus today, to his ministry that turned the world upside down by his amazing love and grace and kindness and compassion, by his refusal to rule by force, his refusal to judge by merit and achievement?

How do we respond to the identity of Jesus, the one who comes as Lord and Son of God, as the appointed Savior who rescues people, as the King who dies on the cross to save sinners? How do we respond? Jesus wants the followers of John to understand. He wants us to understand. He is the one God promised.

He is the only Savior. And he calls us today to wisdom, to receive him as Lord by faith. And he calls us to worship, to worship him as the King of love, the one who loved us and gave himself for us.

[31 : 16] I'm going to pray in just a moment, and perhaps we can get the junior church in, and then we will move towards the Lord's Supper. Lord, we are so thankful for Luke's gospel as an opportunity for us to see the love and compassion of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Thank you for the care he showed to the weak and the suffering and the poor. God, we thank you for the invitation and the welcome that he extended to those who were rejected by many, who were ignored and kept at a distance.

Thank you for the love of Jesus that would lead him to the cross, to die in the place of sinners, to take the punishment that we deserve, to give us his perfect record of righteousness, to give us forgiveness and eternal life.

We thank you that he truly is the king who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Thank you that he is the king who gives gifts to his people, and especially we thank you for the gift of forgiveness and eternal life, for the gift of your spirit in our life.

[32 : 57] Lord, we pray that our attitude to Jesus would be one of grateful worship, as we consider the love that he would long to show to each one of us, the saving love he would give to us.

Help us to trust in him now and always, and we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Now we're just going to wait a little moment while the boys and girls come in from their classes.