

AM Luke 7:24-35

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Date: 03 May 2020

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[0 : 0 0] Well friends, good morning again and welcome to another sermon.

This week we're considering Luke chapter 7, Luke chapter 7, verses 24 through 35. Luke chapter 7, verses 24 through 35. But let's pray together as we begin.

Heavenly Father, we pray for ourselves now as we come that you would open our eyes. We pray that your word may speak to our hearts. We pray that the Holy Spirit might minister mightily amongst us.

That he might unstop our deaf ears. That he might lift the scales from our eyes. And that we might see and know the great truths of your word we ask. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's read from God's word then. Luke chapter 7, verses 24 through 35. When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John.

[1 : 0 4] What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in king's courts.

What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.

I tell you, among those born of women, none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John.

But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him. To what then? Shall I compare this people of this generation?

And what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, We played the flute for you, and you did not dance. We sang a dirge, and you did not weep.

[2 : 0 9] For John the Baptist has come, eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, He has a demon. The Son of Man has come, eating and drinking, and you say, Look at him, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

Yet wisdom is justified by all her children. Amen. If you keep that open in front of you, it will be good as we look at it together. Luke chapter 7, verses 24 through 35.

We've all had that experience of walking around a supermarket, looking for something that we just can't find. Perhaps you're not so accustomed to doing the shopping, and someone has sent you to find an ingredient that's particularly tricky to find.

You know, your wife or your husband or whoever might say to you, Look, can you go to the shop and get me some turmeric? The other night, Suzanne sent me to the supermarket, looking for a particular brand of medicine.

Now, I found the medicine aisle okay, that was no problem, but I couldn't find this brand of medicine that she was looking for, for love nor money. This is in the midst, of course, of social distancing, when you're not really supposed to hang around looking for things.

[3 : 2 0] When you go to the shop, you're supposed to get in, get what you need, and get out. So as I stood there in the medicine aisle for about five minutes, I was kind of conscious that people were wondering, Well, what on earth is he doing?

Anyway, there was a woman there. She was working. She was restocking the shelves of medicine, and she came to me after a while and said to me, Are you okay? Can I help you with anything? What is it that you're looking for? And so I told her, and within about two seconds, she said, There's the medicine there that you are looking for. Now, what does all this have to do with Luke chapter 7?

What does all of this mean in regards to Luke chapter 7? Well, in effect, Jesus asks the same question about John, doesn't he? What was it that you were looking for?

What did you go out into the wilderness to see? What did you hope to find when you went out to see John? Did you hope to find a reed shaken by the wind? Did you hope to find a man dressed in soft clothing?

[4 : 22] No, of course you didn't. You went out to see John because he was a prophet. Because he spoke God's word to you. Jesus is reminding the people here of who John is.

Jesus is reminding the people here of the ministry that God had given John. Jesus is reminding the people here actually who he is. John is the forerunner, Jesus says.

John is the one who would go before the Lord's messenger. And in effect, he's saying to the people, Well, I am the one who comes after John. I am the one whom John was sent ahead of.

I want to see three things this morning. See three things together. Firstly, we want to think about a divine prophet. We want to remind ourselves of who John is and who his ministry came from.

Secondly, we want to think about a divine division. A divine division that as Jesus brings this teaching, we see some accept it and some reject it. Some accept who John was and others reject it.

[5 : 24] And then thirdly, finally, we want to see a divine wisdom. What does wisdom look like? So firstly then, a divine prophet. A divine prophet.

And we can see that in verses 24 through 27. Verses 24 through 27, a divine prophet. So remember where we are in Luke's gospel. We thought last week about this doubt of John the Baptist.

We saw how he was in prison and sent people to Jesus. Sent his followers to Jesus saying to him, Look, are you the one who is to come? Are you the promised king? Are you the Messiah?

Or should we look for another? Are you really the Christ or not? We saw Jesus' response to him.

Jesus' response to his disciples was to tell them, Well look, go and tell John what you see.

Go and tell John what you hear. Go and tell John what's happening here. Go and tell him how the lame walk. Go and tell him how the blind see. Go and tell him how the sick are healed. And then see what he says.

[6 : 26] And it's then, after they've left, verse 24. After John's messengers have gone, verse 24. Jesus turns to the crowd and he wants to talk to them about John.

He wants to question them about who John was for them. Look, what did you go out to see, verse 24?

What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? Why did you go out to see him? Why did you go out to listen to him? Why did you go out to be baptized by him?

What was it you hoped to see? A reed shaken by the wind? Now what does that mean? It's kind of perhaps a little bit difficult for us to understand. But we might say today, you know, what did you go out to see?

A daffodil shaken by the wind? Of course, as we remember the ministry of John the Baptist, he couldn't exactly be accused of that, could he? He couldn't exactly be accused of changing his message to suit the public opinion of the time.

[7 : 30] He couldn't exactly be accused of bending this way and that way, this way and that way, depending on what the mood of the people was. No, that wasn't John the Baptist. We remember as those great crowds came out to be baptized by him in Luke chapter 3, what is it that he says to them?

You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? That's not exactly a popular message. That's not exactly a man who's seeking to win popular approval, is it?

The modern politician is, of course, plagued by the focus group. He's enslaved to the focus group. What does a particular group of people think about a new policy that might or might not be passed? It is, of course, a necessity of being in politics. After all, you need votes to get elected. But they're enslaved to the focus group. They're enslaved to public opinion by necessity.

But that wasn't John, was it? He wasn't a man concerned with public opinion. He wasn't a man concerned with what people thought about him. He wasn't a man concerned about what people said.

[8 : 37] He wasn't concerned with what played well with any particular audience. Instead, he spoke God's word. Instead, he fulfilled his ministry. He did the work of preparation that the Lord had given

to him.

He preached the word of God. Where does our certainty come from this morning? It comes from the word of God.

It's no coincidence to me that those denominations that have lost their confidence, have lost their certainty and surety on the word of God, are those denominations that have so easily and quickly capitulated to the court of public opinion.

It's no coincidence to me that those denominations that have lost their confidence and hope in the word of God, are those that have so quickly compromised to the standards of the world.

They are those who are swayed by every wind and wave of public opinion. Our surety comes from the fact that God has spoken to us in his word.

[9 : 45] That God has revealed himself to us in his word. If we don't have confidence in that. If we don't have confidence that God has spoken in his word.

Then we'll be a reed shaken by the wind. Because we won't have any anchor. We won't have any surety and comfort.

So that's the first thing Jesus says. Well look, what did you go out to see? Did you go out to see a reed shaken by the wind? No, you didn't. John couldn't be accused of that. Well then, what did you go out to see?

Verse 25. A man dressed in soft clothing. Again, that couldn't exactly be a criticism of John the Baptist. It couldn't be said of John the Baptist, could it? He was a man who dressed in camel's hair. He was a man who wore a leather belt round his waist. He was a man who ate locusts and wild honey. He wasn't a man who was living a comfortable life. He wasn't a man who lived in soft furnishing and palaces.

[10 : 44] This was a man who lived a rough, ready lifestyle. No, Jesus says. Those who live like that, those who are dressed like that, are in king's courts.

They're in the palaces. That wasn't John. So if it wasn't a public opinion barometer. If it wasn't a man dressed in fine clothing. If it wasn't a king, then what did you go out to see?

Well, Jesus answers verse 26. What did you go out to see? A prophet, yes. And more than a prophet. You went out to see a man of God.

You went out to listen to someone who would bring you God's word. You went out to hear what God had to say to you. That's why you went out to see John. Not because of his clothing.

Not because he told you what you wanted to hear. But because he told you the word of God. More than that, Jesus says. Not just a prophet.

[11 : 42] Not just any old prophet. But actually the one that Malachi prophesied about. The one who Malachi said would come before the Christ. The one who would be the forerunner. Would be the one who prepared the way for the saviour.

And as I said at the start. There's an obvious inference to be drawn from that, isn't there? Because Jesus very subtly here. He's reminding them who John is.

He's reminding them that John is the one who would go before the Christ. But actually what he's also doing is reminding them who he is. John was the forerunner. John was the one Malachi prophesied about.

John was the great prophet sent ahead of God's king. But the inference is clear, isn't it? Well who's the one who comes after John?

Who is the one who John prepared the way for? Well, it's me. John went before me.

[12 : 40] I am the Christ. I am God's chosen king. I'm the one John was making the way ready for. I am God's long promised, long expected king.

But maybe the question is, well what does that mean for us this morning? Practically day to day, what does that mean for us this morning? Well I think we can have confidence, friends.

That when people hear God's word, they recognize it for what it is. Now don't misunderstand me, don't get me wrong this morning.

When people hear God's word, they may still reject it. But I think deep down inside themselves, they know that it is the word of God. When people hear the word of God spoken by the man of God, they know what it is.

They might reject it. They might want nothing to do with it. They might turn away from it. But they recognize it as God's word. Just as people here recognize John. They knew he spoke God's word to them.

[13 : 48] They knew he brought them God's word. When people hear it, they know it. As Christians, our job is to be faithful with the message that God has given us.

As Christians, our job is to be faithful in sharing the message that God has given to us. We're not to be swayed by any wind and wave of doctrine. We're not to have liberty to make up our own gospel, to make up our own good news.

Rather, we focus on the word, focus on the Bible and focus on God's son. The results are up to God. The results are up to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

But we know that God's word will not return unto him void. Secondly then, we want to think about a divine division. A divine division.

And we see that in verses 28 through 30. Verses 28 through 30. A divine division. So Jesus has reminded them about John.

[14 : 47] He's reminded them what they went out to see. He's reminded them why they went out to see John. Not to see a barometer of public opinion. Not to see a man dressed in luxury. But to hear God's word.

He's reminded them who John is. He's reminded them of his prophetic ministry that he exercised. And it's then that verse 28 perhaps hits us like a ton of bricks.

So Jesus has just spent the past couple of verses emphasizing how great John was. Jesus has spent the past couple of verses emphasizing how important John's ministry was. And then we get to verse 28.

I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Okay, fine. We get that. That fits in. That ties in with what we've just read. But it's then what Jesus says that perhaps hits us like a ton of bricks.

Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. Again, Jesus is showing us the upside down nature of his kingdom.

[15 : 49] He's perhaps showing us the back to front nature of his kingdom. He's reminding the people here what true greatness will look like.

What true greatness actually is. Now we need to be careful here. And we need to make sure that we're talking about the right things. And we're understanding the right things here.

Because some people read this, what Jesus says in verse 28. And they say, well see, John isn't in the kingdom of God then. Some people read this and say, well look, Jesus says the one who is in the kingdom of God is greater than John.

The one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than John. Therefore, John isn't actually in the kingdom of God. But that's not what Jesus is talking about here at all, is it? The response that Jesus gave to John's disciples, I am more than confident, would have been enough.

It would have satisfied John's curiosity. It would have satisfied John's doubt. He would have thought, well, look at all the things I've seen. Look at all the miracles I've seen. Look at the spirit descending and remaining on him.

[16 : 51] That would have been enough to satisfy John's doubt. John would have thought, I'm pretty sure he is the Christ. So what's Jesus getting at then in verse 28?

What does he mean when he says that he is the least in the kingdom of God is greater than John? Well, think about it. In their eyes, John looked great.

And he was great. Jesus reminds them of that. In your eyes, John was a great prophet. In your eyes, John was almost a hero. In worldly terms, John had a very key ministry.

In worldly terms, John prepared the way for the Christ. But none of this would have mattered a jot. None of this would have made any difference.

Had John not had faith in Christ. Had John not had faith in God. Had not John had trust in God as his saviour. And that's what Jesus is getting at here.

[17 : 51] John looked great in worldly terms, yes. But the thing that made him truly great was the fact that he was in the kingdom of God. The person who is least in the kingdom of God.

The person who is the lowest of the low in the kingdom of God. Is greater than the greatest person in this world's eyes who does not know Christ. That's effectively what Christ is saying to them here. It's a reminder to us this morning of where true greatness lies, isn't it? True greatness lies not in being the CEO of a multinational corporation.

True greatness lies this morning not in having a multi-million pound turnover in your business and being the highest earner in the church. True greatness this morning lies not in the fact that you're

interviewed by newspapers and you're invited to contribute to industry journals. Instead, friends, true greatness. True greatness comes from being in the kingdom of God. True greatness comes from knowing Christ as your saviour.

[19 : 01] True greatness comes from knowing the peace of sins forgiven. True greatness comes from having that right relationship with God. True greatness comes from knowing Christ.

John looked great in the world's eyes. But his true greatness was in the fact that he was in the kingdom of God. Maybe you're here.

Maybe you're listening in. And you have advanced in the world's eyes. Maybe you're here and people ring you for your opinion on the latest things happening in your industry.

Maybe people depend on you and on your advice. You've done okay in the world's eyes. But it doesn't mean a jot if you do not know Christ.

The people heard this. The people listened to what Jesus had to say about John and about his greatness. And notice then, this is where the division comes. Because what happens? Verse 29.

[20 : 03] When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just. Why? Because they had been baptized with the baptism of John. So that's one group.

One group say God is just. One group rejoice in all that God has done through John the Baptist. But then the other group comes. The division comes in verse 30. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law rejected the purpose of God for themselves.

Not having been baptized by him. Notice how Luke puts it. Notice how Luke describes it in verse 30.

It wasn't just that the Pharisees weren't baptized by John. It wasn't just that they refused to submit to John's baptism. But what did they do? Verse 30. They rejected the purpose of God.

For themselves. God sent them John. And they rejected him. They rejected God's purpose for them. God sent them the Christ.

[21 : 07] God sent them his son. And ultimately, they would reject him too. God sent their fathers prophets throughout the ages. And some they rejected and some they killed.

They rejected the purposes of God for themselves. They wouldn't receive the ones whom God had sent. They wouldn't receive the word of God. They wouldn't listen to the man of God speaking the word of God.

The sad thing is that they should have known better than anyone else. The sad thing is that they were the experts in the law. That they were the experts in God's word. That they were the ones who should have known more than anyone who Christ was.

They should have known more than anyone the role that John the Baptist had as the forerunner of the Christ. When God's messengers appeared.

They rejected them. And rejected the purpose of God for themselves. I'm sure most of you listening this morning have never been in the situation where you've fallen behind in a loan or a credit agreement.

[22 : 14] But if you are, what will happen? The bank will send you a letter. They'll say, look, you've fallen behind. Here's an opportunity to make arrears. Now you're free to ignore that letter. But chances are the letters will keep coming.

Will keep coming. Will keep coming. They'll send you letter after letter. Until eventually they have to take decisive action. You can ignore the letter. You can ignore the advice that the bank has given you.

But ultimately it will catch up with you. So too here the Pharisees rejected the man of God. They rejected the message of God.

But time and time and time and time again. And eventually it all caught up with him. I've said it before.

And I'll say it again. One of the biggest dangers that we face as a congregation. One of the biggest dangers that we face is knowing lots of things about God.

[23 : 11] Without ever really knowing God. That we know the finer points of doctrine. But that we don't know God himself.

That we never come to that point of repentance and fear. You see, knowing things about God isn't the same as knowing God. Being able to defend and debate the finer points of doctrine isn't the same thing as knowing God.

Rather we come to know God through repentance and faith. We come to know God through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Pharisees knew lots of things about God. The Pharisees knew lots of things about God's word.

The Pharisees could debate the finer points of the law until they were blue in the face. But they did not know God. But this section also reminds us, doesn't it, of this.

It tells us of an immediate division. It tells us of a division between the tax collectors and the people. And the Pharisees and the lawyers. But this section reminds us of another division that's coming.

[24 : 19] A division on that great and final day of judgment. A day when the sheep will be separated from the goats. A day when the wheat will be separated from the chaff. A day when the believers in Jesus Christ will be separated from the unbelievers.

Are you ready for that day? Have you made the preparations for that day? Are you ready for that separation that will occur? How do you get ready?

Will you repent of your sin? You ask God to forgive you for all of the wrong things that you've done. For all of the times that you've offended him and his holy law. And you turn to Christ.

If you haven't done that this morning, then you're not ready. If you're not ready, however many zeros are in your bank account, you're not ready. However many contacts are on your phone book list, you're not ready.

A divine division is coming. A full and final divine division is coming. None of us know the day or hour when it will arrive.

[25 : 24] But all we can say with any great certainty is that it's one day nearer today than it was yesterday. And we need to be ready. Thirdly, finally, this morning, then, we want to think about a divine wisdom.

A divine wisdom. And we see that in verses 31 through 35. And this section is quite tricky for us to understand. I think it was certainly quite tricky as I came to prepare it.

Jesus says, look, what will I compare this people to? Verse 31. What shall I compare this generation to? Verse 31. They're like a child. They think like a child. They reason like a child.

He fleshes it out a little bit for us in verse 32. They're like children sitting in the marketplace calling to one another. We played the flute for you and you did not dance. We sang a dirge and you did not weep.

And what does that mean? Well, they didn't respond in the appropriate manner. They didn't respond in the appropriate fashion. When there was a time of joy, there was no dancing. When there was a time of mourning, there were no tears.

[26 : 25] They didn't respond as they should. And Jesus gives us, thankfully, Jesus gives us the interpretation of that in verse 33. John the Baptist came eating no bread and drinking no wine.

And you said, look, he has a demon. John didn't respond in the way that they thought he should. They didn't. John didn't look like the man of God that they wanted to see. The Son of Man has come eating and drinking.

And you say, look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Jesus didn't respond in the way that they said he should. And Jesus is saying to the people here, look, you can't have it both ways.

You can't reject John because he doesn't eat and drink and reject me because I do. You can't have it both ways. You rejected John because of his lifestyle and you're rejecting me because of mine.

There are things this morning that may make us feel uncomfortable with Jesus. There are things that we may struggle to understand and struggle to accept. But don't reject Jesus because he doesn't live up to your norm.

[27 : 34] Don't reject Jesus this morning because he doesn't live up to what you think Jesus should be. Rather, investigate for yourself. Look at the evidence for yourself.

Test what Jesus says for yourself. And then you'll see him as the savior of mankind. You'll see him as God's son. The one who came to lay down his life so that we might be free.

Amen. Thank you.

Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.