**The good news is proclaimed to the poor**

Luke 7:18-35

Key Verse 7:22

**““Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard. The blind receive sight, the lamb walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.”**

The question for Jesus, which is “Are you the one who is to come or should we expect someone else?” is one of the most important questions people can have. Indeed many people have been asking the question for centuries. The Jews think they have an answer. And their answer is ‘they should expect someone else”. Christians believe Jesus is the one who is to come. John the Baptist must have believed that Jesus is the one who is to come at first. But later he sent his disciples and ask the question.

Probably the reason he asked the question is the difference between John’s expectation and what Jesus was doing. John might have wondered, “Why is not my situation of improved? I am still in prison although the Messiah started to work. Where is the judgment of the Lord?” Indeed John the Baptist was beheaded even after Jesus started to work as the Messiah. John’s expectation was totally different from what Jesus was doing.

When our expectations and what God is doing does not match, we can also have questions. When we look at our realities it is hard to believe that the Messiah came 2,000 years ago and has been working since then. People ask questions, “Ever since Jesus came as the promised Messiah, nothing changed. The world did not improve. People are still evil, and it seems that evil increases all the more.” In addition, the ratio of believers to non-believers seems to shrink all the more as the world population increases. Indeed some Jews asked, ‘What did Jesus do? He did not do anything. Nothing has been changed.’

What can be our answer? What can be our proof that Jesus is the one who is to come and he is the promised Messiah? Today’s passage answers the question. My message has two parts.

Part I. Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard. (v.18-23)

Part II. Wisdom is proved right by her children (v.24-35)

**Part I. Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard. (v.18-23)**

Look at verses 18-20.

**18John’s disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, 19he sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” 20When the men came to Jesus, they said, “John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?’”**

Here the word ‘all these things’ means what Jesus has done until that time. It includes the healing of the centurion’s servant and raising up a dead son of the widow. John’s disciples told him about all of what Jesus has done. What was John’s response? Did he say “praise God!”? No. **Calling two of them, 19he sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”**

His question shows he was confused. Once he proclaimed that Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Now he was doubting.

Indeed it is one of the most important questions for a man to ask to Jesus, “Are you the one who is to come or should we expect someone else?” because the answer for the question determines one’s eternal destiny and salvation.

To the question, Jesus did not answer directly saying, “Yes, I am he”. But rather he answered indirectly.

Look at verses 21-23.

**21At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. 22So he replied to the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.23Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”**

Jesus answered the question by what he did, and what he did was supported by the Scriptures.

Why didn’t Jesus answer the question directly? Probably because they could still ask evidence of Jesus’ claim that he was the one who was to come even if he said, “Yes, I am”. Jesus knew his self claim did not mean much. He needed to provide the evidence. The evidence he provided was the Scripture. So Jesus said **“The blind receive sight, the lamb walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.”**

And his answer is consistent with the Scriptures which described the work of the Messiah.

**Isaiah 6:1-2a**

**“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me, to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”**

**Isaiah 29:18**

**In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.**

**Isaiah 35:4-6**

**Say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.” 5Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. 6Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.**

According to the Scriptures what Jesus has done proved that Jesus was the Messiah.

But why was John confused? It is because his knowledge about Jesus was limited. These are two messages of John in the gospel of Luke.

The first one is:

**Luke 3:7-9**

**7John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 9The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”**

This passage reveals John’s stern warning against religious leaders who did not repent, and he preached the judgment.

There is another passage from John. It is from Luke 3:16-17.

**Luke 3:16-17**

**16John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”**

Here, John talked about Jesus. He talked about Jesus’ greatness, and Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit, and his judgment was around the corner.

According to what John said, there would be judgment against those who did not repent. But he could not see the judgment of the Lord when the Lord came.

Isaiah 6:1 talked about **“proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners”,** but nothing happened to him. He did not hear any good news. So he might have wondered and sent two of his disciples and asked, “Are you the one who is to come or should we expect someone else?”

We may also wonder if Jesus is the really the Messiah, the Savior of the world, when we look at the reality of the world. It seems that the violence of the world increases all the more especially when we see what ISIS in middle east does. Recently they beheaded two innocent Japanese people, and showed it through videos. There was violence by Muslim extremists in France, killing many people including magazine editors. There are so much violence in Africa and India and Afghanistan against women. It seems the world is becoming more violent and dangerous place to live. So we may wonder where is the salvation Jesus brought if he is the Messiah, the Savior of the world? What did he do for the last 2,000 years?

When we look at our own problems, it does not seem that they are decreasing. As times goes by they may become harder and increase more. So we may wonder, saying to Jesus, “Are you the one who is to come or should we expect someone else?” “If you are the promised Messiah, and the Savior of the world, why my problems and troubles do not disappear?”

If we ask the same question to Jesus what could be Jesus’ answer? I believe his answer is the same. “**Look at what you have seen and heard.** **The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.** **23Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”**

Jesus knew believers could stumble on account of him. Jesus knew they could doubt whether he is the Messiah. But his answer is the same. His answer is based on the Scriptures which described the work of the Messiah.

Jesus said, “The blind receive sight”. How many of us receive sight from Jesus? I mean spiritual sight. Please raise your hands if you receive sight from Jesus? There are many evidence that Jesus is the Messiah if we look at what he has done based on Scriptures.

Jesus also said, “the good news is proclaimed to the poor.” All others are miracles such as ‘the blind receive sight, the lamb walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised.” But ‘the good news is proclaimed to the poor’ is different from all other miracles. And why did Jesus mention it instead of just mentioning miracles? It is because all the other miracles are evidence of the good news. They came as the result of the good news.

The good news is good news of the kingdom of God. “The kingdom of God” means ‘God is reigning as the King. It means God is the one who has almighty power over all and anything and everything. It looks like that the power of evil and violence seems to be the ruler when we look at around us. But the bible says that it is not the power of evil but the Lord who reigns.

And it is the good news because the Lord’s reigning over the power of evil has been given to us free of charge. Last Sunday we learned that Jesus’ compassion is our hope when we do not have any hope. The compassion of Jesus is good news because it is given to us free of charge. It has nothing to do with who we are or what we do. It is given to us by who Jesus is.

The same truth applies to the good news in today’s passage. The good news of the kingdom of God is that God is the true king who reigns over any power and authorities including the power of sin and death and violence, and most of all, he offered such good news to us free of charge. It is the news that Jesus has freed us from all and any powers of darkness, sin, and death once for all. Surely this is good news of great joy.

Obama said to his audience in his speech of the State of Union referring the news of economic recovery, saying, “People, This is good news!” But the good news Jesus proclaimed is the good news of all the good news throughout human history. That is Jesus has freed us from all the power of sin and death and all evil once for all.

Jesus said, “and the good news is proclaimed to the poor”. “The poor” do not necessarily mean financially poor people. The poor mean those who are humble enough to accept the good news which was proclaimed to them without any doubt but accept it with great thanks and joy. The poor are so blessed because they received the most precious gift all free of charge thanks to Jesus.

We see the world is full of violence and power of death. But what does the bible say? **1 Corinthians 15:55-57 reads, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Do you see darkness in your heart? Do you see un-forgiveness in your heart? Do you see hatred in your heart? Do you see jealousy in your heart? Do you see powerlessness in your life? You all have them, and I know because I do have them too. Now then where is the good news? Where is the good news when we look at our selves who are full of darkness inside? Where is the good news?

The good news is in the Scriptures. How then should we interpret all of darkness inside of us and all the violence and evil in the world? We should see them as fog which will disappear without any trace when sun rises. They exist like fog, but they have lost the foundation of their power. Their foundation, the root of their power, has been destroyed by Jesus.

What is the basis I say? I say it based on what the Scripture says.

The Scripture says we have been set free from any power of sin and death once for all through Jesus. But our reality shows that we are full of darkness. Which is true, our visible reality or Scriptures? Scriptures.

The trouble of John the Baptist came when he trusted his realities more than the Scriptures. John suffered and even was beheaded, but it was not given for punishment purpose but for the purpose of rewarding.

Believers and righteous people suffer also, but their suffering is not for the purpose of punishment but for the purpose of great reward. Indeed Jesus allowed John the Baptist to be beheaded for his great reward.

When the Messiah came he did not remove evil from all of men’s life practically. It will be a time when the kingdom of God will be fully revealed, the time of Jesus’ second coming. At that time all of evil will be completely wiped out even from our realities. But right now we have promises, the promises in the Scriptures that the power of death is broken once for all. And Jesus wants his people to believe the Scriptures rather than visible reality and live a victorious life.

It is like life in the wilderness for the Israelites after they left Egypt. In Egypt they were slaves for 400 years. But in the desert they were free. They were not slaves anymore although they might have suffered a lot from slave mentality which was deeply rooted in their minds and hearts and deeds. They were freed indeed, but in their practical lives they were suffering from slave mentality and many bad habits. But that does not mean they were not free. They were free indeed. If some of the Israelites did not believe they were free because of their sinful habits in their practical lives, what would you say to them? You would probably say, “You, fool! Don’t you know you are free?”

To those who lived in Egypt as slaves, the good news was ‘they were freed from slaves.”

Jesus freed us. And all of miraculous work, the blind receive sight, the lamb walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised is the evidence that God is the reigning king. The evidence of his reigning power appears in the form of all kinds of healing and restoration, including the resurrection of the dead. They are signs to show how much the good news is good. It is beyond man’s understanding. So the bible says ‘good news of great joy for all the people.’

Do you have darkness inside you? Do not lose heart. Christ has already won the battle for you, and you have been set free from the power of darkness. Do we see the world is full of violence and danger? Do not fear because the sovereign Lord reigns. When his time comes they will disappear like fog.

So how can we be sure that Jesus is the Messiah? What can be our proof that Jesus is the one who is to come? The answer is ‘Scriptures’.

**Part II. Wisdom is proved right by her children (v.24-35)**

Now look at verses 24-28.

**24After John’s messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 25If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. 26But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.27This is the one about whom it is written: “‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ 28I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”**

In this part, Jesus highly honored John the Baptist as the greatest man among those born of women. But at the same time Jesus revealed the limitation of John the Baptist by saying “the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

John was greatest because he testified about Jesus right before Jesus appeared. But he is limited in his knowledge about Jesus and the kingdom of God. The least in the kingdom of God is greater than John because of the kingdom of God.

The same truth is revealed in Mt 13:17.

**Matthew 13:17**

**“For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”**

Now look at verses 29-30. “**29(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, because they had been baptized by John. 30But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)**

“To be baptized by John” means ‘repentance’, because John’s baptism is the baptism of repentance.

Here “God’s way” refers to revelation of the kingdom of God through Jesus after John’s baptism of repentance. God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus, and Jesus came as the Messiah, and he did what the Messiah would do according to the Scriptures. That was God’s way. God’s way is to repent first and believe in Jesus. God’s way shows the importance of repentance, and it shows the importance of the kingdom of God.

“God’s purpose” to the Pharisees and the experts in the law refers to “God’s counsel”.

“God’s purpose” for them was to receive the kingdom of God through Jesus. But they rejected God’s purpose for them because they did not repent. Since they did not repent their sins their spiritual eyes were blind, and they could not see the goodness of the kingdom of God for them.

Finally look at verses 31-35.

**31Jesus went on to say, “To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? 32They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other: “‘We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry.’ 33For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ 34The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’35But wisdom is proved right by all her children.”**

Here the people of this generation include the Pharisees and the experts in the law. Since they did not repent their spiritual eyes were blind, and they only saw a demon from the prophet John the Baptist, and saw only a glutton and drunkard from the Messiah.

Most of all, they could never find anything good either from John the Baptist or the Son of Man. They were like people who complain. People who complain will complain even if what they complain is removed. They find another negative aspect and still complain again.

But Jesus said, **‘But wisdom is proved right by all her children.”**

Here, “the wisdom” may refer to the good news, the good news of the kingdom of God. It probably means God’s reigning through repentance and faith in Jesus.

In today’s passage the children of wisdom may refer to all people who acknowledged that God’s way was right. And wisdom’s children include the tax collectors. The Pharisees and experts in the law were not included although they were religious leaders.

In conclusion, what can be our proof that Jesus is the one who is to come and he is the promised Messiah? The answer is ‘Scriptures’. When we see Jesus is doing what the Scripture says the Messiah would do, we know he is the Messiah. So we have a choice. Do we want to believe reality or do we want to believe the Scripture? Depending upon what we trust we may stumble on account of Jesus or we may stand firm on account of the Scriptures.

One word: Good news is proclaimed to the poor