

December 15 2013

Scripture Lessons ~ *Isaiah 35:1-10,*

Matthew 11:2-11

Sermon *Are You the One?*

Last week's sermon I spoke with you about how John the Baptist had tried to prepare his people for the coming of the Messiah into their lives. The story of John the Baptist really doesn't end by the side of the river Jordan as he instructed the people on how to be prepared for the coming of Jesus into the world. The story continues, he goes on to baptize Jesus himself and then even goes further as he preaches repentance amongst the people of Israel. Unfortunately though in the process, as with most prophets, John manages to pretty much alienate everybody with his message. And his biggest mistake comes when he gets the king upset with him. It seems that Herod, had according to at least to the Jewish law had illegally married his dead brother's Philip's wife, her name was Herodias. God challenged him on this and on many other improprieties which were going on in his court at that time. As you know the king really didn't like it very much when they were told what to do and Herod was no exception of that fact. So he decided to throw John into jail' to shut him up and keep him from causing any more trouble in the kingdom. While John was waiting in jail, I am certain, he had an awful lot of time to think, and a lot to think about. And one of the things he must have thought about was whether all he had done for the cause of the Messiah during the course of his life had been worth it. We often do that ourselves as we take a minute, a pause as we look back on our lives. Has our life been worth it? It would have been naturally for him that he would call some of his disciples together for one last mission to find if Jesus was the one that he had gone out on a limb for, was truly God's Messiah. So John did just that, he sent his disciples on that last mission to Jesus and when they arrived they asked Jesus that very important question, the one which we all have to answer for ourselves one time or another during the course of life. Are you the One who is to come or shall we look for somebody else? In other words

are you the one we have been looking for all our lives or should look elsewhere for meaning or for purpose in this life. Each of us has to go through life searching for something; all of us seeking meaning for the chief purpose for our lives; something we can grab on to and to know that we have not lived our lives in vain.

Many times unfortunately for those the journey which leads to meaning in life takes them down some pretty darn rocky paths. Maybe for some were led down the path of addiction; for some maybe the search for the meaning leads to a dead-end with material possession; some search for the meaning of life in superfluously shallow personal relationships; while still others look for what they want in life in career goals; power and the wealth that comes with them. Many people, some of us right here today search for meaning in life through our religious faith; some in fact in the faith that we possess in Jesus Christ'. Unfortunately though some search in Christianity for things that are really not there. Or if they truly seek Jesus they have sort of serious misconceptions about what kind of Jesus they are going to find once they find him. Many for example I think they see heaven on earth in their Christian faith. They seek perfection. If this so, they quickly awaken to the fact that the church is filled with just as many people who are imperfect as in the rest of the world around them. Others come to faith in Jesus seeking black and white answers for every single problem that they ever face on this earth. Maybe a sort of hiding place from those world problems and difficulties and they might satisfaction in some places or for a short length of time happiness in that search but usually reality creeps in we and we realize that life isn't always that easy to explain sometimes. Our faith does give us great direction and great comfort in life but there will still be gray areas in our lives in which we may never have complete answers.

Still others of us look to Christianity for the right social club to which we can belong maybe there is a group where we can find activities that we can enjoy like music, arts, and politics or building things together; or a group where only the people of our range or political party, or profession or economic or social status gather

together periodically throughout the course of a week. And certainly we all need a sense of belonging, you are all here because of that sense of belonging that we all need and the church does have social aspects and activities that all of us truly enjoy. But if this is all that we want in life is to join the right club a there will be a great sense of disappointment when those people with right group in the church find their desires completely unfulfilled. This is a place that we like to say everybody is welcome regardless of their status. These are things that some people see in Jesus, but the question remains and John's question remains what is it that I am seeking or as his disciples asked Jesus are you really the one that we are seeking or should we seek someone else?

And what kind of Jesus are we truly looking for? I think in order this answer for ourselves we have to take a look at what Jesus says to John's disciples when they ask that same question. If we look carefully we can see Jesus doesn't give any yes or no answers. Jesus is very good at that. Instead he provides evidence; he provides characteristics which tell John's disciples whether he is in fact that he is the person they are looking for. He lists several accomplishments, the blind see; the lame walk: we need that around here because we have a lot of people limping around; the lepers are cleansed; deaf people hear- we need that to; the poor has good news preached to them. This is all very clear if I am blind or if I have trouble walking or if I am wrestling with illness or bad hearing or death in the family or wrestling with some kind of economic hardship that's good news to me.

But I am going to encourage you again to think outside of the box. I think we can take this another notch further. So the blind might those of us who fail to see God's love for us or the deaf are those who fail to hear about that love or the lame are those who maybe have an emotional disability from receiving God's love in this life. Lepers might be those of us feel like we are outcast from time to time in life. The dead amongst us might be those of us who need a fresh start in life. The poor might be those of us who might need to learn much more about God in order to make some sense of this very strange world that is around us. In case you haven't noticed by now I have just about covered almost everybody

in this room. I have covered just about everybody on this planet. My point is all of us are hurting in one way or another. All of us are searching for meaning; all of us are trying to work toward ways that we can be more true to the person that God has made us to be. And before we can find what we are looking for in this life we have to come to terms for the fact that the way of Jesus is not is not heaven on earth. The way of Jesus is not an answer box. The way of Jesus is above all is not a social club. But, instead it is a place where hurting, searching people like you and like me. My challenge for all of in this advent season is then to figure out where we hurt. What healing might look like for us as a result what we are being called to do and to be by God? If we do this I believe our God will be the one that we are searching for; the one that we are searching for during this Christmas season.

And together we say AMEN