

NOW WHEN JOHN HEARD IN PRISON ABOUT THE DEEDS OF THE CHRIST, HE SENT WORD BY HIS DISCIPLES AND SAID TO HIM, "ARE YOU THE ONE WHO IS TO COME, OR SHALL WE LOOK FOR ANOTHER?"

On Jordan's banks stands the greatest man ever born of woman. He is John the Baptist, the one of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you (v. 10)." John is the Promised Elijah, who is to come. He is that shrilling voice crying on the river bank, "He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire (Mt 3:11)." Jesus Himself came to John to be baptized in that river, and when He did, the heavens were opened, the Spirit descended in the form of a dove, and voice of the Father spoke from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased (Mt 3:17)." John saw all of that. He heard all of that. He spoke about all of that. He even went on to proclaim Jesus to be the "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29)!"

Which kinds of makes you wonder: Why, then, does He send His disciples to Jesus with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another (v. 3)?" A few verses earlier, John is out there wearing camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; eating locusts and wild honey and he is proclaiming that Jesus is a force to be reckoned with. His axe is laid to the root of every tree that does not bear good fruit. His winnowing fork is in His hand. And He's going to clear His threshing floor and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire (cf. Mt 3). There John is proclaiming Jesus. They are working in concert. John has got to be

thinking that no matter what happens to me, Jesus has my back. He is going to be right there to help me.

The problem is: it's not happening. You see, in the course of proclaiming Jesus, John called Herod out for his adulterous marriage to his brother's wife. John calls sin sin. For that, he got cast into prison. In prison, he had plenty of time to think, to reflect. So there John is, in prison, reflecting, and he's hearing about the blind receiving sight, the lame walking, the lepers cleansed, the deaf hearing, and the dead being raised. He's heard about all of this and he has to be wondering, "Why isn't He helping me? If Jesus is here to help people and we are as close as close can be, why hasn't He organized a posse to break me out of this jail? I'm just sitting here in prison and Jesus is just so incredibly unconcerned about me and my situation."

Can you imagine what that's like? You sure you can, because you're a lot like John. You're confident in who Jesus is and why He's here. You know Him to be the Coming One. You know He is the Lamb of God, come to take away the sin of the world. You know Him to be the One who comes to help the helpless.

You also know, that there are times it seems like Jesus just leaves you alone. Like when your loved one was dying; you yourself were sick; your marriage went bad; your house was flooding or suffering some other huge damage; or some other great trouble fell upon you. You look at all that and you say, "Jesus, you should help me with this." And it appears to you that Jesus is out preaching and teaching, healing and raising the dead, but He's not helping you, in your trouble. And you kind of find yourself thinking like John, "Is this Jesus all He's cracked up to be? Is he really the

Coming One? Is He really the Lamb of God? Is He really come to help me in the day of my trouble, because right now, it doesn't seem that way."

It's so easy in our human reason and doubts to find ourselves asking that question John the Baptist asked Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" That's the question. And here's Jesus answer, "the blind received their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them (v. 5)."

Before anyone can even say, "Come on, Jesus, it was a "yes" or "no" question! That's all I want – a "yes" or a "no"!" Jesus goes and gives you a speech about the blind receiving their sight, the lame walking, the lepers being cleansed, the deaf hearing, and the dead being raised up. And you have to understand that this is a far better answer than "yes" or "no". In fact, this is the only answer that will tell you Jesus really is here to help you.

When you find yourself in trouble; when you find yourself questioning Jesus – where He is; what He's all about; if He cares; if He's here to help you – Jesus is very concerned about that, so He does not leave you to your own devices to figure it out. He does for you what He did for John -- He points you to that which is most true. He points you to that which is most certain. Namely, He points you to the Word of God and how it is that He is that fulfillment of that Word.

That's what Jesus is doing when He talks about the blind receiving their sight, the lame walking, lepers cleansed, the deaf hearing, the dead being raised up and the poor having the good news preached to them, because that's what the Old Testament said the Coming One was going to do. You heard it this morning in the passage from Isaiah. Jesus is pointing

to Himself and proclaiming, "I'm the one doing this! I'm the One who is fulfilling the Word of God for you!"

And that's not the only Word of God He fulfilled for you, on your behalf. There's this one as well, "He poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors (Is 53:12)." Transgressors like you. You find yourself in trouble and begin to question God and His goodness and His love for you, because you are listening to those other voices, the voices of the devil, the world, and the weakness of your own sinful nature. But, the Word of God tells you Jesus comes to take your transgressions away.

He does that by taking them upon His own human body and carrying them to the cross. There, He shed His blood all over your sins and died. Removing them from you, forgiving you all your sins. And you can be certain your sins are forgiven because the day after He died, He rose again.

Jesus loves you and cares for you at all times and in all places. And here's what He does for you with His death and resurrection. When you are troubled, stressed out, wondering and questioning, "Does He really love me, does He really care for me? Is He really here to help me?" Come to the foot of the cross and see how much Jesus loves you. He takes His cross and empty tomb and brings it to you by means of His Word; His Word joined to the water of your Baptism; His Word joined to bread and wine of Holy Communion. Think about what Jesus does for you here at His Table: When you are troubled, despairing, worried, wondering where is Jesus to help you, here is Jesus saying, "Here is my Blood, here is my Body, given and shed for you." Here, He fills you with forgiveness, life, and salvation and strength to walk by faith, even in the darkness of the valley of the

shadow of death. He loves you and cares for you by giving you Himself to eat and to drink.

Jesus gives to you the same answer He gave John, "Don't look anywhere else. I am the One to come."