

Jesus and His Servant

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[0 : 00] The reading is from Luke's Gospel, starting to read at chapter 7, verse 18. John's disciples told him about all these things.

Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else? When 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?

At that very time, Jesus cured many who had diseases, illnesses, and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard, that 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.

Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me. After 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 in the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes?

[1 : 20] No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

This is the one about whom it is written. I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare the way for you. I 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. 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.

But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John. Jesus went on to say, To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation?

What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other. We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance.

[2 : 32] We sang a dirge, and you did not cry. For John the Baptist came, neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, He has a demon. The Son of Man came, eating and drinking, and you say, Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

But wisdom is proved right by all her children. This is the word of the Lord. Well, good morning.

Lovely to see you all this morning. Thank you, Martin, for leading. Thank you, Tracy, for reading, leading, reading. And thank you to Matthew and the musicians for playing. And if you were here last week, you might have noticed that I had a cast on my foot.

Well, good news, it's off this week, which is a great joy. A little gag on that. I went to the hospital, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and the doctor said, Right, that's you to go. And he says, You've only brought one shoe.

I thought I was going to get a boot, so I didn't take another shoe, which is annoying. So you gave me a plastic flip-flop to wear home. Embarrassing me.

[3 : 45] Right, let me pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that it speaks to us about who Jesus is. Help us to see your son more clearly now through that word.

In Jesus' name. Amen. And as Martin's mentioned, we're in a series looking at Luke chapters 7 and 8 entitled Jesus and His Salvation.

And that is not the salvation of Jesus, but the salvation that Jesus alone offers to all of us. And we're in the second talk today entitled Jesus and His Servant.

And that is because the passage that we've just read, that we've learned about, or that we've just read, speaks a lot about who Jesus is and a lot about who the greatest of the Old Testament prophets is, Jesus' servant, that is John.

And I've entitled our series Jesus and His Salvation because we need a savior. I need a savior. I don't need someone to help me to live better.

[4 : 55] So this week, someone came into church asking about the Christian faith, and I asked them, what is it that you want Jesus to do for you? And they were like, well, I need him to sort out one or two bits in my life.

I need him to help me live a better life. And if you're sitting here today, and that is you, I might suggest that you ask yourself, what is it that you really want?

Do you just want to live a better life, get God to help you to live a better life, or is it that you want God? Do you want God to save you in a way that no one else can?

You see, the more and more you grow in the Christian life, the older and older you get, the more you realize that you need a savior. And if ever you think about moving on from this fact that you need a savior, that just points out even more that you need a savior to save you.

And so Luke gives the reason for Jesus' coming in that strapline, right at the end of his gospel, that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

[6 : 13] And that Jesus does this through the proclamation of the poor to those who have been outside of Luke's, of God's people. And we read earlier that statement there.

And that statement comes, that proclamation of the gospel to the poor, comes from a reading in Isaiah that speaks of all the signs of what is going to happen when the savior, that is the Messiah, that's the Hebrew word for savior, comes down to earth.

And we notice there, if you're listening carefully, you would have noticed that it's marked by two things. It's noticed firstly, it's marked firstly, by deliverance from enemies.

That's salvation. And the second thing that the coming of the Messiah, that the savior is going to be marked by, is by a settling of accounts, of the restoration of justice and judgment.

And this is true for all saviors, isn't it? So we remember that day many, many years ago, not too many years ago, when Nelson Mandela, he's a great hero of mine as a South African, got released from prison.

[7 : 25] And we remember he came out, walking out of Victor Fester prison, and he said, Amandla! And all the people said, Aweetu! And it was a great day of salvation, oppression, the white people's oppression in South Africa had been lifted.

And then after, what happened after that, a couple of months later, a couple of years later, they had the truth and reconciliation commission, a restoration of justice and judgment.

And I always consider myself lucky enough to have been, to have been alive at the time that Nelson Mandela was released, living in South Africa, and being able to see that.

So you see, my grandfather, he was a great anti-apartheid, activate campaigner in South Africa, and he actually left South Africa to go live in a country where there was no apartheid.

You see, he never saw the salvation that Nelson Mandela brought because he died before Mandela was released. He never saw it. And so it's in this context of this expectation of the Savior coming that John asks who you are to Jesus.

[8 : 40] Are you the coming one? And so we read there in verse 18 and 20, John's disciples told them about all these things. Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, are you the one who is to come or should we expect someone else?

When 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?

And this question of are you the coming one, of who the identity of Jesus is, is the question that really drives our passage this morning. And Luke repeats it, doesn't he?

He says it twice. Are you the coming one? So in our talk this morning, we're going to consider, firstly, we're going to look at who Jesus is, that's verse 18 to 23 if you're a note taker.

Next, we're going to consider who John is, verses 24 to 28. Then we're going to look at who we are, verses 29 to 35.

[9 : 43] And finally, we're going to try and sum that up in a section called Seeing Jesus Through the Cross. So let's crack on. Who is Jesus? Looking at verses 18 to 23.

And so John's question that he brings to Jesus is, are you the Messiah? And this is prompted, if we remember, from last week's reading by all the miracles and healings that Jesus has been going on and about all the talk that has been going on about who Jesus is so that the people in Jesus' time at that time said, God has come to be with his people.

So John is asking, are you the Messiah? That is, are you going to usher in this new age? Are you going to establish God's rule forever? Are you going to bring deliverance from enemies?

Are you going to establish justice? This was perhaps a reasonable question for John to ask because we remember that if we've been reading Luke's gospel that John is in prison at this time.

The Romans still ruled. God was still being sidelined by the religious authorities in Jerusalem of that day.

[10 : 58] Jesus was sidelined by them. And up to this point in Luke's gospel, if we've been careful, readers, we notice that John has never actually met Jesus outside of the womb.

So even at Jesus' baptism in Luke's gospel, Luke doesn't have John there. Luke wants us to see Jesus. Only Jesus. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

And this is perhaps a reasonable question for us today because as we sit here in St. Silas today in the West End, it doesn't look like the end of all things.

Justice for Christians seems absent. People are still sinning, going from bad to worse. That we might wonder, haven't we got this whole Jesus thing wrong?

Well, let's look at how Jesus responds to this question. Are you the Messiah? So we read in verse 21 through to 23. At that time, Jesus cured many who had diseases, illnesses, and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind.

[12 : 03] So 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, the good news is proclaimed.

Blesses anyone who does not stumble on account of me. And so what does John, what does Jesus tell the messengers, John's disciples to say?

He says, report what you have seen and what you heard. And Jesus is emphatic and Luke is emphatic over who Jesus is at this point.

So we have this long list of signs. And it's the third time in Luke's gospel that he's listed this long list of signs. So we've had it, we have it in verse 21, then we have it again in verse 22.

And then when Jesus announced his ministry in chapter 4, we had the same list there. Luke is absolutely emphatic over showing us who Jesus is and that he is the Messiah.

[13 : 05] That he fulfills that list of all the signs that we'd see when the Messiah came in Isaiah 35 and 61 as we read at the start of the service. So it's by this point in Luke's gospel, it's absolutely clear as day that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

And so Jesus might say, well, don't believe me if I say what I tell you that I'm the Messiah. Look at my works and believe on those. And in these signs we have a picture of what salvation is going to look like or at least of what it means to be saved by Jesus.

And it's a glorious picture, isn't it? Can you imagine living in a day when all illnesses were healed like that? When, well, I broke my leg and the next minute it was fixed.

Maybe if you're older you've become stiffer and you can, or less stiff and you can walk freely. What a great picture that is. But the point is here for us not to be enthralled with the signs but to see who Jesus is, that he is God's appointed Messiah.

See, Jesus doesn't want us to chase after the signs and look to establish God's kingdom here on earth. He wants us to see that he is the Messiah and long for that coming heavenly kingdom.

[14 : 31] He wants us to long for the giver and not the gifts. But it's an incomplete picture, isn't it? Because where is God's justice and judgment?

Well, in the West and in the West and we might not like talking about hell and justice. but imagine that there was no justice.

Imagine people could do terrible things and get away with it with no repercussions or punishment or justice. Imagine Hitler and the Nazis got off without punishment.

I know Hitler shot himself but there's a coming justice for him. Or imagine there was no truth and reconciliation commission in South Africa. that would be terrible having no justice.

And as Christians it's not that we don't believe in judgment and justice but that we entrust ourselves to the perfect God who judges justly.

[15 : 36] And so where is God's justice and judgment? And in beginning to answer this question Jesus points us to who John is. So who is John? Verse 24 to 28 and Jesus answers this question by asking the people at that time a question and he repeats it over and over and over again in this passage.

We notice that in the reading. What did you go out into the wilderness to see? What did you go out to see? What did you go out to see? He repeats it. So after John's messengers left verse 24 Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John.

What did you go out to the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind and that's perhaps a reference to the flakiness of the political leaders of that day.

A man what did you but if not what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes. No those who wear expensive clothes and indulge her luxury in palaces those are perhaps references to the religious leaders of the day.

But what did you go out to see? A prophet. Yes I tell you more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written. I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way before you.

[16 : 56] So what did they go out to see? The prophet who prepares the way and points to God's coming Messiah Jesus. So what did they go out to see in the desert?

To see God's prophet that they might see Jesus. But why does Jesus call John the Baptist more than a prophet?

Because John prepares the way for God's Messiah for Jesus. Because he points the way to Jesus. You see John the Baptist gets the significance and importance from his proximity to the Messiah to Jesus.

Jesus. So if I wanted to build myself up and try and impress you guys and show off a bit, I might name drop about a celebrity that I know. But I don't know any celebrities so I can't do that unfortunately.

And you see we gain our esteem and our self-importance from the people that we associate with, don't we? So we're forever trying to associate up the ladder and not down the ladder.

[18 : 07] And John here gets his importance from his proximity to the Messiah, to Jesus. And we see this in John's ministry that John knows that the Messiah is coming.

See, he sees the awesomeness of the Messiah. He sees his salvation and his judgment and he tells the people to repent. So early in John we read I baptize you with water, but the one who is more powerful than I will come.

The straps of whose sandals I'm not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor. To gather the wheat into his barn, but he'll burn up with the chaff, with unquenchable fire.

And with many other words, John exhorted the people and proclaimed good news to them. You see, John knew the Messiah was coming and he gets his importance from that and he tells the people to repent ahead of this coming Messiah.

But then Jesus goes on to say something incredibly surprising and encouraging for us in verse 28. He says, I tell you, among those born of a woman, there's no one greater than John.

[19 : 29] John sees the Messiah. He sees Jesus. He's close to Jesus. Yet the one who is the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

So the least in God's kingdom, so the least of us sitting here today who are trusting on the Lord Jesus are greater than the Old Testament prophet. And that is because we see Jesus more clearly than John the Baptist ever did.

that is, so we see what it is to be saved and judged by Jesus with more accuracy and clarity than John ever did.

You see, John never saw Jesus' salvation. John never saw Jesus die on the cross because as we read Luke's gospel, John was beheaded before Jesus' death.

My grandfather father never saw the salvation that Mandela brought because he died before Mandela was released. So if Jesus is the Messiah and John is his servant who points to him as the Messiah and announces his coming salvation and judgment, where is the justice and judgment?

[20 : 51] See, it still hasn't come yet. And to understand this delay in this coming, we need to understand something about who we are. So 29 to 35, who we are.

So I'll read that for us. 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.

But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves because they had not been baptized by John. Jesus went on to say to them, what can I compare this people of this generation?

What are they like? They're like children sitting in the marketplace, 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. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say he has a demon.

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. But wisdom is proved right by his children.

[21 : 54] So here's a question for you. If it was so obvious and so self-evident that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he did all these miracles, that those who witnessed them in Jesus' time said, God has come to help his people, then why did the people of Jesus' day ultimately not believe in Jesus?

Jesus? Why did they crucify him? Why did the religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees and the experts of the law, reject Jesus?

Let me put this another way, bring it slightly closer to home. If it is so evident for us today that Jesus is the Messiah, that all the extra biblical sources point to Jesus, that there is no man in history where there are as much archaeological evidence for where the historical documents are so certain, that we can be more sure and certain that Jesus lived than Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, and that we know that he did these miracles, and that we see him working within his church family, and that many professors and doctors and lawyers and academics believe in him, why is it that still people today go on to reject Jesus?

And the answer? Hard-heartedness. What do I mean by this? So we notice in verse 29, all the people, even the tax collectors, that's all the poor, the lost, those who are excluded from God's people, when they heard Jesus' words, they acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John.

But we also read that the Pharisees, experts in the law, and all the religious leaders of that day, they rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.

[23 : 55] So what was John's baptism? Well, early on in Luke, we read that John went into the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

God's baptism. So what was John saying in his baptism? He was saying that no matter who you are, where you're from, whatever your background is, what kind of life you've lived, you need to repent, because the Messiah is coming.

You need a Savior. You need to turn to God, to trust God, to deal with sin. And what's the alternative to trust in God, to deal with sin?

Well, it's to trust in yourself, to be right with God on the basis of your own efforts and your own self-righteousness. So what is it that the people and the sinners and the tax collectors were doing when they were baptized by John?

They were saying that they needed forgiveness. They were humbling themselves before the coming Messiah who would save them. They were saying they need a Savior.

[25 : 09] What were the Pharisees and the experts on the law saying in not being baptized by John? Well, they were saying, I don't need to repent. I'm okay.

I've got the old temple system. I've got all of that. I don't need it. I'm a good guy. I'm a Pharisee. I'm an expert in the law. And they were hardening their hearts.

You see, they were more interested in maintaining their position and esteem than in seeing their need for a Savior. And in doing so, they rejected God's purpose for themselves in sending his Savior, Jesus.

And this is nothing new. So we see that reference then later in verse 31. What shall I compare the people of this generation? That's a reference to the people in the wilderness who remember.

Even though they saw all the signs of how God brought them out of Egypt, even though they saw the Red Sea parts, even though they saw God was with them in a cloud of pillar by day and a fire by night, they rejected God out of hard-heartedness.

[26 : 21] Well, if you're a parent here, at this point you'll probably roll your eyes at getting some parenting advice from someone who doesn't have kids. But you see this in your kids, don't you? I imagine.

So you say, don't do that, and they look at you, and they do exactly what you said you shouldn't do. You can see it. They're hard-hearted and sinful from the grave.

We're hard-hearted and sinful from our birth. So what's this passage saying about us? It's saying that we're hard-hearted and that we need to repent for the forgiveness of sins, that we need a Savior.

So either you can be like the tax collectors who are openly bad, and it's clear they need a Savior because they're tax collectors, or we can be like the Pharisees who are self-righteous and have rejected God's purpose and in doing so show that they need to repent and need a Savior before the coming day of judgment.

So where do we see God's justice and judgment? So finally, seeing Jesus through the cross. So what's it going to mean to have Jesus as the Messiah, as our Savior?

[27 : 44] It's going to mean trying to give up to be right with God in our own efforts. It's going to mean to humbly come to him in repentance.

It's going to mean to trust in Jesus, to see him clearly for who he is and what he has done on the cross. It's going to mean seeing Jesus through the cross.

See, on the cross, we have the clearest revelation of who the Savior is. That God loved you so much that he was willing to send his own son to die for you, to bring you salvation, to bring you liberation and deliverance from sin, death, and the devil.

But at the same time, we see God's hatred of sin that ruins our world. And we see the justice and judgment and wrath of God poured out on his Savior, on Jesus, his son.

See, Jesus died for us even though we were his enemies on the cross.

[28 : 59] And yet he still said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. So how do we land all these thoughts that we've had this morning?

So if you want to change your life, if you want to really grow in the Christian faith, if you want to experience a deeper intimacy of God, what should you do?

Well, there's a couple of suggestions. We could change the music. We could try and make stuff more atmospheric. We could jazz it up, get some better musicians.

Sorry, Matthew. That's all good. We could try and make stuff better, a bit more of a show. We could do that. Or we could change the preacher. Perhaps some of you are thinking that this morning.

We could get someone who's more dynamic, someone who's more charismatic, who's more punchy in the pulpit, and they can exhort us and tell us stuff to do during the week.

[29 : 56] And that way we'll change. Or we could start a new program, something entitled Mega Life Extra. And they're Christian equivalent of some of those big name life coaches.

So Tony Robbins, Simon Sinek, and Liz Brown are one of those. Or whoever your latest YouTube favorite is. But all of these fall down because they tell us something to do.

You see, I don't need a program. I've got enough stuff going on in my life. I don't need a program. I need a Savior. I need to see Jesus more clearly.

I need to know Him. I need to love Him. I need to read about Him and His Word more clearly. And see my need for Him and dependence on Him.

Whatever is troubling me in my life, whatever sin I need to repent of, the only way that's going to get away, that I'm going to get rid of that, is if I see my Savior more clearly.

[30 : 59] So when I got ordained a couple of weeks ago, you might remember meeting my brother if you were here, Simon. And I'll tell you a bit about my family slightly, wandered off slightly.

So my brother, my uncle, was an alcoholic. And he was a successful alcoholic because he successfully drank himself into the grave.

My aunt followed the family tradition and did the same thing. And my brother, Simon, well, he started out well in the family tradition.

And then along came this girl, Annalie. And Annalie kind of looked at Simon and she said, well, he's a nice catch. And Simon looked at Annalie and said, well, I like the look of her.

But there was a problem. You see, Simon still had this big idol in his life. He still loved the bottle. And Annalie said to him, look, I'm not going to go with you if you go down that road.

[32 : 01] And Simon looked at Annalie and he said, well, I've got a new love in my life. I've got a new passion that's going to drive me. And it's bigger than the old passion and love that I have, the love of the bottle.

And so he gave it up and he stopped. So for seven years, Simon's been completely dry. So the only way that we're going to be able to change our lives, that we're going to be able to grow, grow as people, to grow into the kind of church that we want to be, grow into people who love the Lord Jesus, is to have a new passion and a new love in our life, to see Jesus more clearly than we have ever seen him before.

So what's it going to look like when Jesus comes again? Let me end with some words from Isaiah 35 of what it is going to look like on that final day when Jesus returns.

says, the desert and the parched land will be glad. The wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom.

It will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon, and they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of God.

[33 : 23] Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way. Say to those with fearful hearts, be strong and do not fear. Your God will come. He will come with vengeance and divine retribution.

He will come to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, which is great, and the mute tongue shout for joy.

Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs, and the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

And a highway will be there. It will be called the highway of holiness. It will be for those who walk on that way. The unclean will not journey on it. Wicked fools will not go about in it.

No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast. They will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and those the Lord has rescued will return.

[34 : 32] They will enter Zion with singing. Everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

O Father, O Father, Jesus, we repent of where we've neglected you, where we have looked away from you, Jesus.

Please become clearer in our lives than ever before. Help us to see you more clearly.
Help us to see your great work on the cross more clearly.

Help us to thirst after you. Help us to turn our hearts to you, day by day. In Jesus' name,
amen.