

Saturday, March 4, 2023
Season of Lent
Day 10

Matthew 11:1–19

After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.

² When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples ³ to ask him, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”

⁴ Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ 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. ⁶ Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”

⁷ As John’s disciples were leaving, 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? ⁸ If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces. ⁹ Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written:

“‘I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.’

¹¹ Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it. ¹³ For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. ¹⁵ Whoever has ears, let them hear.

¹⁶ “To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

¹⁷ “‘We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn.’

¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”

Reflection

There are three main movements in this section. First, Jesus now goes to the places with his apostles that they went and preached. They had prepared the way for Jesus’s coming. You can imagine with what excitement they lead Jesus into the city and begin to introduce him. While this is happening, John the Baptist’s disciples come on John’s behalf with a simple question: are you the one? John had expectations about what the Messiah would do. Namely, he, like much of Israel, was expecting something a little bit more militant. What is interesting is Jesus says “John, look at what I’m doing.” It’s ironic because that is what John was doing and it caused him to doubt. But, if wisdom is proved by her deeds, then just look and you’ll know I’m the one. Hang on John! Finally, Jesus readdresses the crowds, now around the theme that John raised.

People’s expectations. We want good things but we want them on our own terms. John was too disciplined and Jesus was too free. Jesus points out how childish we can be; dance to our tune. The problem is we cannot set the terms for entrance into the kingdom of God. We must see and hear (what Jesus points John to) the nature of the kingdom and conform to it. It is not violent, so it cannot be entered through violence. One must repent, believe, and receive Jesus as Lord to enter into it. But those who enter into it through Jesus are greater because they had/have a greater witness to the kingdom. Not just the Law and the Prophets, but the Messiah; the one who embodies the kingdom.

Jesus’s point to the crowds is fairly simple: you come out to see John and to see me; why? You know we aren’t going to dance to your tune. If you think you’re wise enough to set the terms or to evaluate us, then you ought to be wise enough to see, hear, and understand our ministry and receive the kingdom that has come. The question to us during this Lenten season is: are we wise enough to stop trying to set the terms for discipleship and instead submit in obedience to our Lord?

Prayer

Lord, let our expectations of you die, so that we might have empty hands to hold onto you. Amen.