

The Assurance of Things Hoped For

Luke 7:18-23

February 1, 2018

I want to invite you to turn to Luke chapter 7 if you're not there already. We're returning to Luke's Gospel and looking at a short interaction that takes place between John the Baptist and Jesus the Messiah. It's going to be there in Luke 7:18 to 23, and in this section of Luke 7 the ministry of John the Baptist is in focus, but what is really on display once again is the person and work of Jesus Christ. The point of the whole section isn't just simply to educate us about John the Baptist. He's almost incidental, even though he's in focus.

The point of the whole section is to direct our attention to Jesus Christ, to his work. He, and he alone is to be the sole object of our faith. So let's begin by reading, if you're there in Luke 7:18 and following, we'll start there, and we'll come, we're coming into the context here after John, hears the report about Jesus teaching in miracles.

So the miracle of raising the widow's son in Nain, which directly preceded this, and then also healing the Centurion servant, and probably also the whole sermon on the Mount. That report hit the ears of John the Baptist as he was in prison. He received the report that a great prophet had arisen in Israel, and that report generated a question in his mind, as you'll see here.

Says in verse 18, "The disciples of John reported all these things to him, And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?' And when the men had come to him, they said, 'John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"'"

"In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them, 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.'"

That final verse, "Blessed is the one who is not offended by me." You need to realize that that is the punchline of this section. That is what Luke wants you and me, the readers, to hear loud and clear. "Blessed is the one who is not offended by me." And we've got to ask after reading that, who in the world would be offended at Jesus? Why offence? Especially after we read about all these supernatural works of mercy and grace, who would ever be offended at him?

In fact, for anyone who takes offense at Jesus Christ we need to realize that that carries its own condemnation. To turn away from Jesus Christ is really to confirm your own guilt. To surrender the argument, any argument that you would make against God showing his justice is to surrender the argument. By rejecting Jesus Christ or finding offense in him it shows forth all necessary evidence that your condemnation is just, because there is no reason whatsoever to be offended at Jesus Christ.

In fact, when considering the person and work of Jesus Christ, you ought to come to exactly the opposite judgement about him. What's the opposite of being offended by Christ? To

worship him. It's to worship him. It's to embrace him in faith. It's to love him and to serve him without hesitation, without reservation at all. With utter abandonment and total devotion to bow before him and worship him for all of eternity.

That is the only proper response to Jesus Christ and anybody who does less than that- not worthy of him, but worthy of condemnation. That's what Luke wants us to see here. Through this answer that Jesus gives to John, that those who are blessed are not only not offended by him, but those who are blessed are to cling to him in faith. Blessed is the one who is not offended but instead trust in him and believes in him and in him alone, because that is the very heart of faith. In Hebrews 11:1 we find a very succinct, useful definition of faith that says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

And that's what we're going to see here in our text this morning. What is written here will give you direction whenever you have questions like John did. Whenever perplexing problems test your faith, what is written here will help you to know how to press forward in faith and how to gain the assurance of

things hoped for, just like John the Baptist did here. Just two points for your outline this morning. They're organized around the question John asked, which runs from verse 18 to verse 20, and then also the answer that Jesus gives in verses 21 to 23. That whole section there two points, two sections.

John's question, Jesus' answer, and for, for your notes, here's how you can jot down the first point. It may be in your bulletin, but it says seeking clarity and confident faith. Seeking clarity and confident faith, because that's what John did. John sent a question to Jesus, and he was seeking clarity from Jesus, and he was doing so in an attitude of confident faith.

He didn't have all the information, but he sought information. He wanted to understand, he came in faith. Some believe, some commentators I've read believe John is here doubting in asking a question. As if those who have faith never ask questions. John is here asking a question, but I don't see him doubting at all, I don't see that and I'm going to show you several reasons for that as we work through this.

But before we do that, I'd like you to turn just to set and frame this section of Scripture. I'd like you to turn to the little Epistle of James, toward the end of your Bibles. The pistol of James in the first chapter. I want to frame John's state of mind here by looking at the first chapter of James. If you've ever experienced trials as a believer, this is a well-worn section of your Bible. It's a place you turn often for encouragement and strength, especially in the midst of a trial, because this puts your trials in their proper perspective.

In James 1 starting in verse 2, it says, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness or endurance. And let steadfastness or endurance have its effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing." You think maybe John sitting in Herod's prison, might be, this might be considered one of those trials of various kinds? Maybe? Sure it is.

And God is, through John in his ministry, he's accomplishing these, these vast grand, redemptive testamental purposes through John's ministry. He's revealing the ministry of

the Messiah himself, the sin-bearer, the righteous one, the coming one.

And yet, at the same time, God is also concerned about John. As an individual, as a believer, he wants to sanctify him. John also needed to be brought to perfection, to maturity, to completion, that he too might be lacking in nothing. In this prison fortress of Herod Antipas, the Makarios Castle, that's the finishing school for John's faith.

Let's keep reading James 1:5, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double minded man, unstable in all his ways." So here's John, in prison, he's going through a trial. He needs to be perfected, he needs to endure, and he has a question.

He did lack wisdom and as he reflected on all that had happened, as he reflected on the report that he received from

the disciples that God has visited his people in the form of a great prophet, who'd arisen among them. From those reports he heard, John is having a hard time piecing together the plan. What is the plan? Something is perplexing his mind here. So what did John do? Did he sit in prison and wring his hands and fret? Did he, did he sit in prison and be anxious? And did he believe that it was his right to worry? That he could be excused for being anxious and afraid. Not at all. He simply asked a question in faith without any doubting.

John didn't give himself a pass just because his ministry had landed him in jail. He continued believing, he continued trusting, and when John asked for wisdom, he went directly to Jesus Christ who has all wisdom and all knowledge. He has the answers. So with James 1 in your mind to frame your thinking, go ahead and turn back to Luke 7. And let's think about John's question coming to Christ in that light.

Let's consider how John sought clarity from Jesus and he was coming from this unassailable vantage point of a confident faith in Jesus. It's interesting he's in the Makarios prison, which is perched on the eastern side of the Dead Sea up on a

high hill, and until the Romans destroyed it, it was considered an unassailable castle fortress. It had a vantage point over all the lands to the east. It was high, it was on a rocky outpost, and John was there in an unassailable position, humanly speaking, and he comes from an unassailable position of faith. Confident faith. He sought wisdom to piece together the messianic program. He wants to make sure that he's walking according to the plan, and so he asked this question of Jesus.

Notice first of all, this is maybe a sub-point, you can put a sub-point A in your notes or one or whatever you want to do, is sub-point A, first of all John's question is born out of a faithful ministry. It's born out of a faithful ministry.

Last week we read from Luke 3, and Luke 3 portrayed John as this bold, uncompromising figure. He had the mystique of this desert dwelling monk, along with a fiery fear inducing rhetoric of an end times prophet. He was an incredibly powerful preacher, one who is saturated in scripture, and yet he made his points with simple, direct, concrete language.

You remember the scribes and pharisees came to scout out his baptism ministry, and he looked them in the eye, and he pointed that boney finger at them and he said, "You brood of vipers!" Can't get clearer than that. "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And don't begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For as I, I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that does not bear good fruit is cut down, thrown into the fire."

Wow. Wow. He had absolutely no fear of these hypocritical religious leaders. They had no power over him, no hold on him. There was nothing they could take away because he didn't own anything. Excommunicating him wouldn't help, he already lived in the wilderness far from society, and all those social graces and troublesome hang ups such as manners, things like that.

There's no mistaking John's, meaning when he speaks. No lack of clarity as to who he was confronting, or what he's confronting them about. And in fact, that's exactly what landed him in this prison cell. Josephus, in his antiquities, he fills

in some of the details about this incident that landed John in the Makarios prison. Herod Antipas, he's also known as Herod the Tetrarch. He'd been married to a Nabataea Princess named Phasaelis. He'd been married for quite some time. She's the daughter of Aretas king of Petra, which is located in modern Jordan.

Herod's affections turned away from Phasaelis because he had become infatuated with his niece, Herodias. But Herodias was married to, she's married to her other uncle, Herod Antipas's half-brother, Herod Philip the first. Oh what tangled webs we weave, right? What a mess. But for this incestuous and adulterous relationship and arrangement to workout, both Herod Antipas and Herodias, they had spouses to shed. So Herodias left her husband straight away.

Herod Antipas though, he was trying to make a more secretive, less disruptive, plan to divorce his Nabataea and wife Phasaelis. After all, he had some political things to consider, like King Aretas on his, his eastern border. Phasaelis found out about Herod's plans while he was away. She didn't squawk about it, she kept quiet, made her way back home by the

way of the Makarios Castle. The castle is located, as I said, on the Judean frontier between Nabataea where her father Aretas ruled, and Judea where Herod Antipas ruled, and when she got home, she told daddy about Herod's adulteress arrangement. He wasn't happy; Aretas immediately started preparing his troops for war.

As this whole sordid affair became public, John the Baptist marched up to Herod. And he said, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." That's bold. In fact, turn over to Mark 6 just briefly, Mark 6, so you can see how scripture portrays this. The whole story is there. We're not going to read the whole story, but, but you can read it there in the middle of the chapter. Tells how Herod arrested John and then, and then put him to death at the request of his wicked wife Herodias.

Mark 6:21 and following tell all about how Herodias' daughter Salome, how she danced before Herod and his military commanders. No doubt they were gathering in anticipation of the coming war with King Aretas. Salome gained Herod's favor, he granted her a wish, and as she talked it over with mom, who is

Herodias, she harbored a grudge against John. Evidently John had been tarnishing her snow white image, so she didn't like that.

So the two of them asked for the head of John the Baptist delivered to them on a platter. I mean, wow, that's, that's, that's like ISIS stuff, but practiced by a young girl and her mother. Look at Mark 6:17 and following. This is just giving the summary. It shows how Herod recognized John is really a faithful, righteous man, exonerated him as a faithful prophet.

Says in Mark 6:17, "It was Herod who had sent and seized John, bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. For John had been saying to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly."

Look at the confusion there in Herod. Look at the contradiction in him. As he's perplexed, and yet he hears him

gladly, as he's pressured by his family, and yet he stands as the blockade between Herodias and her murderous intentions. And John, this prophet of God. Since during this time, let's turn back to Luke 7, it's during this time that John hears the report of Jesus' ministry. He is in prison because he has been faithful. He has been faithful.

Herodias wanted him silenced, she wanted him dead, but Herod wanted him silenced too, but for different reasons. He's concerned that John's influence over the people is going to lead to an uprising. Politically, it would be destructive, so he wants, he wants John quiet and he was able to accomplish both goals by locking him up in the Makarios Castle dungeon. Protection from Herodias' murderous grudge, and also removing John's voice of influence from the people. He accomplished both things. So again, John is here in prison and not because he's done anything wrong, he's in prison because he had done everything right.

He'd been utterly faithful to his prophetic calling; he had done exactly what he's supposed to do. He kept himself pure. He called people to repentance. He baptized the penitent. He

pointed everyone to Jesus Christ, even pointed his own disciples to him because he preached boldly, because he preached without partiality, showing no favoritism to the rich and the powerful. John is arrested for his faithfulness, and he's imprisoned.

Just a parenthetical note here, of encouragement to all of us. This may happen to us, right? The political situation in our country is such that we're getting, as Christians a reprieve. But that reprieve won't last forever. We too may encounter trials of various kinds, including persecution. And not because we do anything wrong, but precisely because we are pursuing what is right, and we just need to be faithful. Because as Paul told Timothy, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus," not may be, but "will be persecuted." Second Timothy 3:12.

Don't go to sleep, folks. Don't slumber. Keep your head up and keep faithful. The common people knew that John was in prison because of Herod's adultery. They knew that all this is because of the vendetta that Herodias had against him. They knew John was righteous, that he's a true prophet. He is such a powerful figure, in fact, and so widely and popularly esteemed,

that the religious leaders did not dare to speak a word against John.

In fact, at the end of Luke, in Luke 20, verse 6, it says that they feared that if they said that his baptism was not directed by heaven itself, that all the people would stone us to death for they're convinced the John is a prophet. Even the religious enemies are fearful of speaking against John, because it's known so far and wide he's faithful.

He was so well known that his reputation and influence extended far beyond Judah and Galilee. In fact, even long after his death, John's name was known in places that that Jesus name wasn't. In Acts 19, when Paul arrived in Ephesus, he found some disciples there who didn't know about Jesus' baptism. They only knew about John's baptism. Even far abroad, even posthumously, John is still acting as Jesus' forerunner. That is called not only faithfulness, that's called an enduring faithfulness.

Even the historian Josephus, who's an unbelieving Jew, he had very little to say about Jesus in his works, and some commentators even believe that Josephus deliberately hides

references to the Messiah. He has to go out of his way to not talk about Jesus. And yet, by contrast he writes about John in respectful terms, even reverential terms. After the death of John, after John is murdered, King Aretas marched on Herod Antipas.

The public reason is a territorial dispute, but the private vengeance he sought was over his daughter's dishonor. Aretas wiped out Herod's army. Wiped him out. Josephus tells us, quote, "Some of the Jews thought the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly as a punishment of what he did against John that was called the Baptist. For Herod slew him who was a good man," and Josephus continues to extol John.

He didn't understand John's ministry. He didn't understand what his baptism was all about, but he did discern that the just judgment of God had fallen on Herod in Herod's defeat, the annihilation of his army. Because Herod had beheaded a faithful prophet and influential man of God who was popular among the common people. So John's in prison, and he's in prison because he pursued faithfulness in his ministry. He's in the course of

faithfulness and in the course of faithfulness, you have clarity, mind, clarity of mind to ask questions in faith.

As he anticipated Jesus, he heard this report in verse 18, raised the questions in his mind, and so secondly, sub-point B for your notes. Notice how John's question was born out of a righteous expectation. It's born out of a righteous expectation.

John sought clarity from Jesus, asking a question in the, in the midst of a faithful ministry and also out of a righteous expectation. As John sits in prison, he's waiting for this coming one, the one who is greater than he is, and he's waiting for the coming one to start calling down fire of judgment on the wickedness that imprisoned him, who was a faithful prophet of God. And while John expected Jesus to bring this full final cleansing judgment, here, here's this report that instead Jesus is really, really busy.

But he's performing numerous miraculous acts of mercy. It's not that John begrudged mercy. He preached about God's mercy, it's just that he expected Jesus to wipe out all opposition to usher in the Kingdom. There's Jesus, though, he's moving gently

through the opposition. He's so busy healing people that, by contrast, he seems almost to ignore the religious condition of the land. Very different tone and tenor of Jesus ministry than John's.

And John isn't here judging it as wrong. But he is finding it necessary to adjust his expectations to who Jesus actually is, not what he expects him to be. John has heard the reports and he's gotta be wondering, look what are we waiting for, Jesus? Elijah called down fire, your greater than he is, grab that winnowing fork Jesus. Let's gather all that chaff and light it up with unquenchable fire. We'll sweep the burnt chaff away, and let's start with this house of Herod.

Get me out of prison, let's go. Notice, when John sends, sends his disciples he doesn't say that, he didn't say any of that. He says something that's far more restrained, respectful. He asked a question that is submissive, deferential. In fact, this is one of the most important reasons we know that John is not doubting here, but that he is in fact trusting. He is asking in faith with no doubting. He sought clarity from Jesus, he asked in confident faith, he's trusting who Jesus was. He's

asking a question, born out of a faithful ministry and out of a righteous expectation.

And thirdly, sub-point C in your notes, John's question. It's born out of a trusting devotion. It's born out of a trusting devotion. We've got that background in mind, but let's take a look at the text and make some important observations here. John directed his question to Jesus Christ, and that's exactly the right call. That is where you want to go with all of your questions too.

Notice John sent his disciples, to whom? Verse 19 calling two of his disciples to him, he sent them to the Lord. Look at verse 20, when the man had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you." Luke is making the, the direction and interest in Jesus' word on the matter explicit in the Greek text it's to the Lord, it's to him, it's to you. John isn't interested in in scholarly opinions. He doesn't consult his disciples. He doesn't ask for, he doesn't gather a small group of rabbis who are pious, studied, educated, no he's only interested in what Jesus thinks, he's only interested in getting Jesus' answer to this question because he trusts him.

I'll add this as well, that John's faithful, trusting devotion to Jesus is evident in the fact that John's disciples repeat John's question verbatim. Word for word. They don't change a single word in what they ask, they don't change the word order, they repeat it just as they received it from John. And that's important because the way John worded his question conveys humble submission and trust of Jesus. The devotion is evident in how John phrased the question.

Look at it there, he repeats it twice, that's emphasis. "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" He phrases the question, the content of his question, both of those demonstrate his faith in Christ. It's an either-or proposition here. Which is to say, either you are the coming one or we should look for another one like you. John wants to know here will the Messianic work be split into two people like you? Or are we going to handle the whole thing, you going to handle the whole thing? Are you coming with acts of mercy and healing and then the next version of you is coming with the fire? Or are you doing the whole thing yourself?

He doesn't at all doubt whether Jesus' teaching and miracles validate him, they do. Nor does he dismiss Ja, Jesus' works of mercy as lesser works. He doesn't, he just doesn't understand how all this fits together, that's all. So he poses the question to Jesus because he knows only Jesus can answer it.

In fact, he's got to have some question about himself. He's sitting in prison. He knows the fiery tenor of his ministry and he sees Jesus going in a different tenor, a different form, and he says, "How does all this fit?" So, seeking clarity in confident faith. John is here trying to put the messianic picture together. He's asking a question that's born out of a faithful ministry.

He's asking something that's born out of a, a righteous expectation to see the wicked judged, to see God's Kingdom come. He wants God's name, it's like the disciples' prayer, "Hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That's what he wants. He's got a righteous expectation, and his question here is also born out of deep devotion to Jesus Christ. After all, John is ready to die in this prison, which is exactly what he'll do because he knows all

of this is true. He simply seeks greater understanding. He desires greater assurance here, and that is exactly what he finds.

Consider a second point for this morning, major point in your outline there, finding assurance in certain hope. Finding assurance in certain hope. John came to Jesus in faith, seeking clarity, and Jesus answers him back with a rock solid assurance. An assurance that exceeded far beyond the question that he asked. We're not told exactly where John's disciples found Jesus when they arrived. Seems clear that Jesus was not still in Nain where he raised the widow's son from the dead. According to the parallel account in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew 11:1, Jesus is teaching and preaching in their cities, that is, the towns and villages all up through Galilee.

So John's disciples, they left the Makarios prison on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, and they traveled up north to Galilee. They had to cross the Jordan, they found Jesus, and when they arrived, God had been at work. Providentially in Jesus' ministry, and God is at work to ensure that Jesus is in

full messianic ministry mode so that John disciples be ready to receive Jesus' answer.

Look at verse 21, "In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind, he bestowed sight." I want to give you a few sub-points as we look at Jesus' answer in this section here, starting with this sub-point.

Sub-point A for your notes. Notice first, the providence of God provides the basis of Jesus' answer. The providence of God provides the basis of Jesus' answer. The timing could not have been better here because John's disciples arrived in that very hour, the end of their journey and Jesus in full ministry swing coincides at the very same providential moment he is healing, he is doing miracles, and all of that provides the historical, factual basis for Jesus' answer.

His answer to them is rooted in historical fact. Yes, Jesus is the coming one and there's no need to look anywhere else. Two verbs in the sentence there, verse 21 the verb healed, and the verb bestowed. Jesus is the subject of both of those verbs.

Jesus healed; Jesus bestowed. Both of them point to Jesus' miraculous power. Because Jesus is the one wielding this power these miracles are signs that point to who he actually is.

The first verb is healed, he healed. Says he healed, he cured, he restored people from three things there, from diseases, from plagues, from evil spirits. The word disease is a broad word come, encompassing everything from fevers to cancer, all these chronic conditions, colds, whatever. The word plagues, though, is the more acute term. It's a, it's a word, probably better translated, afflictions. The primary meaning for that word, *mastix*, the primary meaning is a whip, like a literal whip or a scourge, and so that, you know figuratively when it's talking about something afflicting the body, that's what it feels like. Like you're being scourged with something painfully acute shooting pain.

Disease and plague, this means that Jesus' power is able to heal and cure material maladies, biological issues. But notice he's also able to overcome immaterial causes of maladies. The evil spirits which afflict and torment people at both the

spiritual and the physical level. And the verse says he did this for many people.

Many times we've read about Jesus' healing. You might think that he was able to banish disease from Galilee. It says in Luke 4:40, "Those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them." Luke 5:15, "Great crowds gathered to hear him and be healed of their infirmities." Says in verse 17, "The power of the Lord was with him to heal." Luke 6:18 to 19, many people "came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. The crowd sought to touch him for power came out of him and healed them all."

So you might think that eventually Jesus would come to the end of all disease, cast out every evil spirit, but because of the condition of this fallen world, and these fallen bodies, and the nature of fallen angels, they keep coming back. Jesus said in Matthew 12:43, "When an evil unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. And then it says, 'I will return to my house from

which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell therein, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation."

Why? Because the house is not filled by God. It's just emptied of it, evil spirit but not filled with anything else. It's a vacuum for spiritual influence. Jesus has the power to sweep the house, sure enough. But the fallen condition of the world, the fallen condition of humanity, of the spiritual realm, it keeps disordering and polluting and plaguing the house.

Something more than the power to sweep up messes is required to solve the human condition. We need regenerative power, we need power to create anew. That's the next verb, that's what we see next. That's the second verb in verse 21. Not only does Jesus have the power to heal, but he also has the power to give, to bestow, to grant. And in this case, it's the power to grant the blind to see, "on many who were blind, he bestowed sight." Bestow is the word *charizomai* that has at its root the word *charis*, which means grace.

So Jesus, he possessed the power, the power to heal people, but also the power to grace people. He had the power to bestow upon them what they did not have before. In this case, it's the ability to see, but it represents a power that is regenerative in nature. This is nothing less than the creative power of God that called the universe into being with a word.

It's resident in Jesus Christ. Look, I realize it's contrary to the modern scientific age. All of this human discovery and learning that has pumped men up with pride, telling us not to accept the biblical testimony of miracles because after all, if science has invalidated it isn't true. But modern science, by definition, can only observe the observable, can only look at natural processes in motion. By definition, miracles are supernatural. Miracles are outside the limitation of science because by definition they are supernatural.

Verifying miracles requires methods of historical investigation that exceed the limits of science. I love science, but let's not make science God. Let's not make science the absolute standard of all truth. It has a role, it has a use, it

has a purpose, and we are grateful for it. But it is not omniscient. It has significant limitations, especially when it tries to cross over to the bounds of history.

Those who were there, like the writers of the Gospels, like all the people that they interviewed, all the people that they knew, they told us what they saw, they told us what they observed, and their testimony, by the way, is a matter of public historic record. No one who was there in the first century, even Jesus' enemies; no one denied a single miracle that he did. They even tried to lie about the resurrection. They just, they just reacted to what he did. That's all they could do.

All of the record is written for us in the inerrant, infallible word of God. And as God's word, God who cannot lie, God's word tells us the absolute truth, and it is utterly reliable. That's what John's disciples here are witnessing when they arrived. The facts coming into being. They saw the reality of the supernatural, powerful miracles performed right in their presence. They heard the reports of what Jesus had been doing, all of which became a matter of historical record, so the providential timing provides the basis for Jesus' answer.

The historical facts are important folks. Do not negotiate away the supernatural. Do not negotiate away or compromise about the miraculous because they are the facts that guarantee this story is true. When John's disciples arrived, they witnessed what he was doing, they could see for themselves that Jesus is the coming one, there's no need to look for anyone else.

Second sub-point for your notes, subpoint B. The miracles are evidence of Jesus messiahship. Or you could just say the miracles are evidence that Jesus is the Messiah, that he truly is the coming one. And Jesus makes sure that the point is not lost on them. Look at verse 22, "He answered them, 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.'"

John's disciples have been following John. They've been loyal to him; they've been learning from him and it's interesting with a single command Jesus turns John's disciples into his own witnesses. "Go and tell John what you've seen and

heard." That's the essence of witnessing folks, being a faithful witness. It's to tell the truth about what you've seen and heard. Just tell the truth about it. Jesus provides a simple summary for them. He gives them the language for their testimony. Here's what you can say. They arrived to witness his healing power, others told them what he had accomplished before they arrived, all through his ministry.

For all physical maladies, blindness, lameness, leprosy, deafness, even death, Jesus provided a physical remedy. And whereas these people had before been defined by their maladies, they are the blind, they are the lame, and so on. Now they're defined by action. The present tense verbs point to an ongoing kind of action. The blind are no longer the blind, they are now seeing, seeing in progress. The lame are now walking, look at him walking around. The lepers are now cleansed. The deaf are now hearing, the dead, there they are, raised back to life.

What's Jesus pointing to here as he talks to John's disciples? The fruit, right? Isn't that exactly the test that he gave to all of his disciples in Luke 6:43 to 45, "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, each

tree is known by its own fruit." Look, you want to test the validity of a ministry, Jesus says look, start with mine. Start with mine, and start by looking at the fruit. Three times in this narrative Luke has called attention to Jesus' works of supernatural power, divine power.

In verse 21 as the narrator, Luke pointed to the works themselves as historical facts, and then in verse 22 he's recorded Jesus calling attention to their work in a general sense, what you have seen, what you have heard and then specifically he gives the list of miracles. Three times coming out in the text, we understand what repetition is, and especially in threes, right that's emphasis.

Luke is drawing all our attention to the works of God that validate Jesus' ministry. It is a supernatural ministry, filled with divine power which demonstrates Jesus' ministry's from God. Okay, but how is this answering John's question exactly? Remember he's replying, Jesus is, to John disciples, and they've conveyed John's question to him verbatim. He's not ignoring it. He's not sidestepping the question. Jesus understands what John is asking. John is wondering whether there's a part one and Part

two to the messianic age. He's wondering whether he's Messiah 'A' and a 'Messiah B'. So Jesus responds to John's question. His response is targeted, it's intentional, and it answers the question.

Look at verse 22, "Go and tell John what you've seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up," And then this, "The poor have the good news preached to them." That last line. Jesus didn't come simply as a miracle worker. Jesus came to do what only the Messiah could do, what he was prophesied to do, namely, to preach the Gospel to the poor.

We saw that in the Sermon on the Mount, "Jesus lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and he said, blessed, are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now for you should be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you, when they revile, you when they spurn your name as evil on account of the son of man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy. For behold, your reward is great in heaven, for so their profit fathers did to the prophets."

Look, that's the Gospel preached to the poor. That's something only the Messiah could do, and it's the last of the evidences that Jesus gave as he sent John's disciples back to John. Go tell John, I am preaching the Gospel.

Preaching the Gospel is in the emphatic portion or position in that sentence, not only because it comes last in that list, but because it is in contrast to all the other evidences. Preaching the Gospel provides a spiritual remedy, not a physical remedy. And yet, it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that deals with all maladies, spiritual and physical. It's the spiritual first and then the physical. By his atoning death on the cross, Jesus died for the sins of all who believe. And by his perfect, sinless life, the fact that God raised him from the dead, he becomes the victor who leads his people in victory. As Romans 6:10 says, "The death that he died, he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God," and thus death is swallowed up in victory.

Along with all of death's agents like blindness and lameness and leprosy and deafness and all the rest. So when

Jesus sends the report back to John, go tell John I'm preaching the Gospel. He's answering his question by telling John that he's doing and fulfilling what only the Messiah can do and fulfill. For John, who knew his Bible he would hear in Jesus' answer echoes of what Jesus had said to his hometown crowd in Nazareth.

Quoting from Isaiah 61:1 and 2, he claimed to fulfill an exclusively messianic prophecy. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me," to what? "To proclaim the good news to the poor; he sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovering of sight of the blind." There's another connection with our text, "to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Over and over again, it's about preaching, proclaiming. Jesus came to fulfill that text which is a messianic text. The Holy Spirit is upon him. This is a reminder to John of that prophecy in Isaiah which Jesus came to fulfill. And by the way, it's also a reminder of what John himself had witnessed when he was baptizing Jesus. "The heavenly affirmation the heavens were opened. The Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a

dove, and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased.'" The voice of the father announcing his affirmation of the son in physical represent, representation, representation of the Holy Spirit descending upon the Messiah himself. That's John's answer.

Third thing that helped John find full assurance in the certainty of hope, sub-point C. Third thing here, not only the providential timing. Not only does the miraculous power provide evidence that Jesus is fulfilling the role of the Messiah, just as prophesied, but also there's a third thing. Jesus goes beyond John, answering John's question to secure John's current and future all assurance.

This is what, John, keeps John safe along with all believers. Look at verse 23, "Go and tell John what you've seen and heard" and then this, "Blessed is the one who is not offended by me." It's a categorical statement, that is maxime, "Blessed is the one who's not offended by me." The verb offend, it's the word *skandalizo*, to scandalize, to trip somebody up.

And Jesus is calling for full absolute complete trust, he conveys that, though, in the negative for emphasis, but that's the message. In other words, Jesus is telling John, and he's telling us this, by the way, so we need to listen. Don't let your expectations, which are set by the limitations of your current level of understanding, don't let your expectations lead to you being offended by me.

What expectations? Well, in John's case expectations that Jesus should set aside miracles of mercy and start calling down the fire. Expectations in the mind of the rest of the Jewish nation. They needed to set aside temporal expectations and consider a deeper victory that needed to be won over sin and death first, before eradicating any of the physical enemies.

This is the problem of the prosperity gospel, isn't it? All the faith healing teachers. They point to the physical first. Not the spiritual. The spiritual they just kind of assume as a given fact and they call attention to the physical. You want health, you want wealth, you want prosperity? That's what God came to do. He came to make you happy now. Just send me your money, and then health, wealth and prosperity for you.

Jesus didn't come to conquer all the Roman armies. He didn't come ridding is Israel of all false worship. At this time, he didn't come and depose all the false leadership, both secular and religious. All of his work here is contrary to popular expectation, but he's not going to be crammed into the box of popular expectation. It's way too small. They don't understand. He forges ahead with what he knows to be true. Instead of becoming offended by him, the people need to trust Jesus. To see the power, to see his miracles, and let him set their expectations.

Sadly, most everyone in Israel at that time, led by false shepherds, they would come to be offended by Jesus. They would commit murder to rid themselves of him. And thus, Simeon's prophecy would come true. Amazingly spoken, while he was holding that little baby in his arms. Behold this child as he looked at Mary, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fallen rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that supposed so, that the thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." Holding a little innocent baby.

Preaching of the truth does indeed expose hearts. It reveals thoughts, it exposes motives, it confronts jealous ambition and vain conceit. And carnally minded people don't like that. They don't like it at all. Beloved, be sure to examine yourself. Make sure that you're not among those who are offended by Jesus Christ, who stumble over his word, who ignore his demands. Don't be proud and obstinate. Be humble. Receive his word. Embrace Jesus Christ in faith. Have a teachable heart. Let him shape your expectations. And if you do, that registers you officially among those who are the blessed. It's the same word from the Sermon on the Mount, *makarios*.

Thematically, this statement right here connects us back to Luke 6, to the Sermon on the Mount. And it tells us that this also is a characteristic of a *makarios*, a blessed person. This is the character of a true disciple, and it boils it down to just one thing. Jesus true disciples, the blessed ones, the poor, the hungry, the weeping, the hated. They will not be offended by him. They will instead embrace him in faith. They will find full assurance they will rejoice and certain hope that they might as their eternal reward worship him forever.

Quite an introduction to this section on John the Baptist right? It's not about John, is it? It's about Christ. John sought clarity from the Lord. He sought it in confident faith and he got the answer he was looking for. He found full assurance, he found certain hope, and you can do the same thing that he did. Whenever you face perplexing problems, whenever you face trials in your life, whenever you face tests of your faith, you start by doing what believers do.

You stay active and faithful in ministry, you obligate yourself to your brothers and sisters in the church. You commit yourself to the local church and give yourself to a body. You're not some wandering appendage, you're connected, you're enjoying, you're commissioned in love to one another. Stay active and faithful in ministry and then when problems arise when things happen you don't understand you go directly to Jesus in prayer. You tell him about it. You ask questions of him because, he hears you.

Then look to Scripture. Read about who God is about, what he has done. Look at the historical facts and see, is he not faithful? Is he not powerful? Does he not care? Look directly to

Jesus Christ. See who he is, see what he's done. See what he did to secure your salvation. Dying on a cross. Approach God with a teachable heart. Let him lead and guide you into full assurance of understanding. Trust him. Let him set your expectations.

He'll guide you into assurance and joy. That is the heart of a *makarios*. Those who are the blessed ones, those who are true believers. And that is a good thought to take us into our time around the Lord's table. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the time that we have had in your word this morning. It's all too brief. There's so much to say and so little time, and yet you've given us the time that you count necessary to stir our hearts to love and devotion to you. To orient our minds and our thinking around Jesus Christ and his finished atoning work. And we're reminded even now of what it cost to save us from our sins to rescue us from an eternity in hell. We thank you father, for your loving kindness toward us. We thank you for the glorious Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we pray, amen.