

Are You the One Who is to Come?

3Rd Sunday of Advent Year A 2022

Matthew 11:2-19

Deacon Bob Millott

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your, sight O LORD, my rock and redeemer.

AMEN

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent. Our Advent readings are to prepare us for the coming of Christmas and the second coming of Christ. If you were here last week you heard the Gospel reading was about John the Baptist preaching about the coming of the Messiah. John shows up every year on the second Sunday of Advent. He was shouting out to the crowd "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt 3:1b. John was looking for the coming Messiah. In today's reading John shows up again. He is still looking for the Messiah.

John and Jesus had parted ways since Jesus' baptism. Jesus went up to Galilee and John stayed and did his ministry along the Jordan River.

Jesus was more interested in ministering to the outcasts in Capernaum and other small towns while John, with his fire and brimstone fashion, wanted people to repent and prepare for the hoped-for coming Messiah.

During John's ministry, he was what we would call a fire and brimstone preacher and therefore thought the coming messiah would be like him and reestablish the earthly kingdom of Israel. In our reading a couple of weeks ago we heard John say, "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to Jesus' baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Matt:3-7 And then in verse 12 "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Matt:3-12 You can imagine what these people thought to be spoken to like that. **They** thought they were hot stuff in regards to everyone else. Here John was warning them of the future coming of the Messiah who he hasn't yet realized was his cousin Jesus.

Sometimes people when reading this morning's Gospel, are puzzled by why John was asking if Jesus was the Coming One or the Messiah everyone was looking for. Was John starting to have second thoughts about who Jesus was? Didn't John baptize Jesus in the Jordan? Didn't he see the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus and hear God say, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."? Matt 3:17b

John had already irritated Herod for condemning his marriage to his brother's wife. So, Herod had John arrested and put into one of his desert prisons. This one would be to the east of the Jordan river in his palace at Machaerus.

Even though Herod put John in prison he still thought he was a righteous man and enjoyed listening to him preach.

We do know there was some time that elapsed between when John was arrested and when he lost his head, so John had plenty of time to wonder about who the person was that was going to reestablish Israel to her former glory.

John was a very popular person considering he did his baptism and preaching on the shores of the Jordan river and nearby.

After John baptized Jesus, they each went their own way. John with his fire and brimstone preaching and Jesus with his very calm preaching of love for one another.

While in the filthy hole Herod had John put, John had plenty of time to wonder who the coming Messiah would be and when would he come.

John and the people he ministered to had been wondering for many years about the promised Messiah. The people were looking for a person God would anoint to lead their nation from the suffering they had been enduring for many years.

John asked his disciples to go and find out if Jesus was the one who was to come or if they should be looking for another.

I recently read a short story I thought would be fitting for this sermon.

Several days ago, a pastor went out to a local jail to visit one of his church members. The jailer asked the pastor for his identification. He handed him his driver's license. The jailer replied "No." He said, "I need something that shows you are a minister." He said I have an ordination certificate hanging in my church office. The jailer then asked, "Don't you have some sort of ID card or something saying you are a pastor?" The pastor replied, "Don't I look like a pastor?"

The jailer frowned and said he would take his word for it, but it was obvious he wasn't very happy about it. Ever since then the pastor wondered, "What, exactly does a pastor look like?" Without proper identification, how would others know what he did for a living? What proof did he have?

What does a Christian look like? If someone stopped and asked you while you were in downtown Douglas if you were a Christian, what proof would you have. How are we to know who's who?

This sort of question was being asked by John. John was in jail for ticking off Herod and John's days were numbered.

In the early days of the Church the first Christians were Gentiles and some Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Today the distinction between Christians and Jews are that Christians believe Jesus is the Promised Messiah and the Jews are still waiting for the Messiah. For the Jews Jesus was just a great teacher and miracle worker.

The Kingdom is here. Yes, we still have violence and injustice around us. Many are poor and hungry.

For some people John's question "Are you the one who is to come?" ^{Matt 3-3} haunts them. We as Christians believe that Jesus is the Promised "Are You the One who is to come?" ^{Matt 3-3.}

If we all turned and embraced the Good News of Jesus and followed Him by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, The Kingdom of God would be fully realized by everyone. Imagine what kind of world we would be living in.

We have no physical proof that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the One who is to come. All we have to go on are the activities of His ministry on earth: The blind received their sight, the deaf received their hearing, and the lame were able to walk, etc. The most important above all is, the poor received the good news preached to them; the real miracle is in the preaching of the Gospel. Those who hear and read the Gospel have a decision to make. They must either believe that Jesus is the One who is Coming or He is not. So as Jesus said, "Blessed is the one who takes no offence at me."

Statistics tell us that charitable giving is up and that supposedly means the teaching and living by example what Jesus taught us is stronger than ever. Matthew has Jesus telling us in Matt. 5:42 "Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you." Our charitable giving indicates that the Messiah has come. Another way is how we treat strangers. What type of hospitality do we show? Biblically

speaking we should be treating strangers and friends alike. It is the welcoming of one another into our homes and lives.

Hospitality is a sacred duty.

I want to give you a little lesson in Latin on the word hospitality. The word hospitality evolved from the Latin hospitalitis, which referred to the relationship between guest and host, as it took its root from hospes, the word for host, guest, stranger, or visitor.

I want to close with one of Charles Wesley's prayers that we sing in Advent.

**Come, Thou long expected Jesus
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.**

**Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,**

**Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone.
By Thine all sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne. AMEN**