

# Ascension Lutheran Church

Pastor Godkin's Sermon for the week of December 13, 2009

The Kingdom of Heaven: Hidden and Yet Revealed, Now and Not Yet (Luke 7:18-28)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. The text for today's homily is from the third chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. Our Lord says to us:

<sup>20</sup>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?'" <sup>21</sup>In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. <sup>22</sup>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."  
<sup>23</sup>And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

This is the Word of God.

Dear friends in Christ, A group of scientists once did a study on the behaviour of a certain kind of snake. This particular snake had two heads. Each head had its own mind. One head would try to control the body. On one minute the snake would crawl in one direction. The other head would take over and the snake would crawl in a completely different direction. The snake was truly confused and conflicted. The same can happen when

Doubts occur when what we expect to happen is not happening, or what we think should be happening is happening. This leads us to be confused and to waver and wonder what is right.

For John the Baptizer, it was a case of needingsome assurance. What was happening was not what he expected would happen. So he sent two of his disciples to Jesus to make sure that Jesus really was the Messiah, the Christ, the long-awaited

This was the same John who had preached with such force and power and inspiration and conviction that Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He had proclaimed that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. He preached a Baptism of repentance to prepare people to receive Jesus as their own Lord and Saviour. In fact, John's life had been consecrated for the sole purpose of preparing the way for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And yet what do we see? John had been in prison for months and the Kingdom of God did not appear to be unfolding as he might have expected. It was a grim time for John. His disappointment was natural and yet he had not lost hope. He was looking for some

Disappointment, discouragement, disillusionment, we all experience these things at one time or another. The complications and problems and troubles of life don't always bring the results we expect. Things don't always unfold exactly the way we planned. Perhaps

John was experiencing some of these questions while he pondered his fate and the result of his life's work while stuck in King Herod's lonely prison cell. Even here he needed a word of encouragement. And so, John's disciples were sent to ask Jesus, "Are you the One who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

Jesus had preached the same message as John, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near". And yet it can seem almost paradoxical. This might seem like a seeming contradiction. One might ask, 'If the kingdom of God is near then why are there still wars and sins, and death, and so many problems in the world? Why is life such a struggle? If God loves me and has redeemed me why do I struggle? Why is life so hard?' The answer is hidden in the Person of Jesus.

The Kingdom of God is hidden but it is found and revealed to us in Christ. Jesus is the priceless treasure. His value is hidden but through the eyes of faith we can see His worth as the Lord and Saviour. The Scriptures are His treasure map that lead us to the hidden Treasure. It is imperative that you have a steady diet of the Gospel each day. It is our nourishment for the soul.

Isaiah tells us in chapter 53 about Christ that "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him". In other words, Jesus did not seem to be anyone out of the ordinary. He was a man and is God but on the surface He appeared to be simply another man from Israel. On His surface He did not stand out as possessing any divine glory.

But there is more than meets the eye. In Colossians 2:9 it says that in Christ, "All the fullness of the Deity dwells bodily".

As John lay chained in his cell he looked for a sign, something that would give him comfort and reassurance that Jesus indeed is the Christ. Likewise, when we struggle to know that God is still with us, that He still loves us, we need something concrete to hold onto, something rock solid to give us inspiration and invigorate our spirit.

In response Jesus pointed to His healing and life-restoring miracles, the tangible proof that He is the Christ and the King of the Kingdom of heaven. He said, "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."

Jesus gives an emphatic response. Who could do these things but the Christ! The Kingdom of God had indeed arrived; the reign of God had come. When Jesus speaks of the proof that He is the Saviour, He points to His healings. He points to His concern for the poor and needy; and He gives sight to the blind; and He gives hearing to the deaf and life to the dead. It is good news for you. When we are poor in spirit and in need He is with us and always.

We live in a unique scenario as Christians. The Kingdom of God has come. Jesus has set up His Kingdom and it is a spiritual Kingdom. It is hidden in you. Your body is a temple for the Holy Spirit. Through faith God has come to live inside you to be our Saviour and to sit on the throne of your life. He has come to reign and give you life with Him.

And yet we do not yet see the Kingdom in its fullness. We wait for, to see with our own eyes. Right now, we

Thenow/not yet situation pervades every aspect of Scripture. It says that through Christ we are counted as we are at the same time sinners. We have the old sin about God's ways and live whatever way we want. The nature that delights in the things of God. And then

In the Lord's Supper we have supper with God Himself Body and Blood of His Son Jesus Christ. With this He forgives sins of us. We have it by faith and yet we happen when Jesus returns. We are waiting for the

Now back to John's situation. Could Jesus have swum John released if He wanted. Well yes, He certainly Divine King, God had a special purpose for John. Go see the future and He used John's imprisonment and to Christ. Ultimately John was brought to His true has a good purpose for even the trials we go through heaven with Him.

Jesus brings God's reign but He will not always give does not give a two-year-old cookies for lunch even parent knows what the child needs. As Proverbs 19 says man's heart but it is the Lord's will that prevails".

Rather, God invites us to find comfort in His presence come our way. As Proverbs 3 says, "Trust in the Lord on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge His paths straight".

Sometimes it can feel like we are in a sort of prison struggles and concerns. Like John, Christ gives a promise even when the prison door doesn't seem to get sprung

Christ does fulfill prophecy. Jesus Christ has come His cross and resurrection. He has set up His Kingdom in all its fullness. We can hold on to this rock to you and I with you. And our Lord holds out His receive.

May the man around us who don't know Jesus as the Divine Saviour come to believe and have life. May God use His Kingdom. And as we will sing in our closing hymn uplifted, we plead, O Lord, to see the day of our freedom. Amen. The peace of God that surpasses all our minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

for the time being. This we have to live by faith and not by sight.

of the Christian life. For example, saints, holy ones of God and yet of nature that leads us to forget we have the new reborn holy struggle back and forth.

He treats us to a meal, the very He gives us the Kingdom and the don't see its full glory yet. This will be the return of our blessed Emmanuel.

He opened the prison door and had had the power to do that. But the Lord's plans were for the long run. He even his martyrdom as a witness home in heaven. And like John God's. His goal is to bring us home to

Jesus what we think we need. A father though the child may ask for it. The Lord says, "Many are the plans in a

promise even when trials and struggles with all your heart and lean not on your own strength; He will make your

promise like John, at least in our various promises that is enough to hold onto the way we want:

He has conquered death and sin by His death and His coming back to reveal solid truth; for in His grace, He holds on to His hand day and night for anyone to

Divine God-man and Lord and our hidden talents for the glory of our day, "With hearts and hands we are redeemed that sets your people free from all unrighteousness, keep your hearts and