

## **God Removes the Questions About His Coming**

3<sup>rd</sup> Sun. in Advent – 12/14/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Matthew 11:2-15 Pastor Keith Besel

vv. 3-4, [John the Baptizer sends men to ask Jesus,] **“Are You the Coming One or are we to await another?” And answering, Jesus said to them, ‘Go and all of you report to John what all of you are hearing and seeing’.”**

### **Introduction**

✧ Let's start with an honest question. Please give me your honest answer. Raise your hand if you genuinely like to wait. ... I think it's safe to say that patience is not a gift that most of us possess in abundance, right?

➔ And yet waiting is simply a part of this earthly life. But there are different forms of waiting, aren't there? There's the kind of limited, but agonizing waiting that you do at the doctor's office or the DMV or driver's license office. Though it may be less than an hour, it still feels like an eternity.

➔ Then there's the waiting that comes with the end of the semester or a marital engagement, a pregnancy or the beginning of retirement. The time is scheduled and will certainly come, but it's still so far away with so much to do in between.

➔ Or there's the sort of waiting we do when we expect something but can't control it, like waiting for a special package, a phone call, or email.

➔ And one more, it's a very different kind of waiting when you wait for an idea to come that will solve a problem, or an inspiration that will create a work of art, or an insight/help that will end a crisis. That kind of waiting is frustrating; nerve-racking really because there's no guarantee that a solution will ever actually come.

✧ Yes, there are many kinds of waiting, some are easier than others. But waiting itself is not inherently bad, though it can cause very real difficulties. Sometimes it can even lead to big problems, like wondering what exactly it is that you're even waiting for.

➔ Fortunately, the most important thing you and I, as Christians, are waiting for – and we do know what it is – has actually already come! Jesus has already come to bring us into the rule and reign of God. So we don't have to wonder while we await His promised return.

### **I. Waiting can lead to second-guessing.**

✧ But let's be honest, it's easy for me to stand up here and say it. But actually waiting without second-guessing or wondering about all sorts of “what ifs” is a whole different issue isn't it.

✧ Well, this seems to have been the problem facing John the Baptizer here in today's Gospel Reading.

➔ John was the one whom God sent in fulfillment of the prophet Malachi's words in the second-to-last verse in the Old Testament where God said, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of Yahweh comes.” Jesus even confirms in verse 14 of our text that John “is Elijah who is to come.”

➔ John was the one who saw Jesus approaching him out in the wilderness by the Jordan River and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” And then, when He baptized Jesus, he saw the Holy Spirit descend in the form of a dove and remain on Him (Jn.1:32). He heard the voice of God declare, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Mat. 3:17).

- ➔ If anyone should have been fully convinced that Jesus is the promised Messiah; the one sent to save God's people from their sin and guilt, you'd think it would be John the Baptizer, right?
- ✕ And yet, things haven't turned out as quickly or as precisely as John must have expected them. He came to Judea and proclaimed the need for souls to repent in preparation of the promised Messiah. He played no favorites, even calling King Herod to repent for marrying his brother's wife. And now, look where that put him – in Herod's dungeon, waiting and wondering what his fate would now be.
  - ➔ Would he be put to death? Would he just waste away in prison? Or would Jesus actually do something to get him free?
  - ➔ Verse three seems to indicate that waiting in prison was leading John to second-guess whether Jesus really was the promised Messiah after all. John taught and proclaimed that, when the Messiah came, He would bring God's judgment against the forces of evil, unbelieving men (Mt. 3:10); that the reign and rule of God had arrived with this Jesus of Nazareth (Mt. 3:2).
  - ➔ Verse two even tells us that John "heard in prison of the deeds of the Christ", but the longer John has had to wait in a cell, the more his circumstances seem to be leading him to question whether Jesus really is who he thought He was. What John has heard doesn't seem to match up with the end-time message that John had preached nor what he himself is experiencing right now behind bars.
  - ➔ "Is Jesus really the fulfillment of God's plan?" "Is He what my whole life has been all about?" "Or is there someone else that I and my followers should actually be waiting for instead?"
- ✕ You and I can certainly relate to John's questions as they only seemed to grow the longer that he had to wait, can't we? We may not be in prison but our circumstances can also lead us to second-guess Jesus' place in our lives.
  - ➔ "I've tried to be faithful in my Christian discipleship – I've attended worship ... and Bible Study; I've returned a tithe of my income for the working of God's mission in His Church; I've tried to love and serve those around me in the name of Jesus, but still, I can't seem to get ahead in my career or my finances or my relationships with others." "I've prayed and I've waited ... and I've waited some more, but Jesus doesn't seem to come through and make my struggles any better. In fact, they only seem to be compounding one on top of another."
  - ➔ Or what about this one, "I grew up Christian. I've witnessed to my friends at school and at work and around the neighborhood about Jesus. I told them all, in love, that they need to turn away from all of the world's distractions and traps, and trust in Jesus instead. Yes, I even emphasized the Gospel over the Law – that Jesus came and died and rose back to life in victory over all sin, so that they can have forgiveness and eternal life." "But not one person I have witnessed to has ever taken me up on my invitation for them to come to church with me; or even mentioned that they are interested in Jesus." "And on top of that, now I've been diagnosed with this rare and deadly disease. After all of this, the longer I wait for Jesus to bring me healing or at least bring one of my friends to faith, the more it seems like nothing changes."
- ✕ Each of us has our own real life examples like this, don't we? It certainly can make us question, "Is the kingdom of God; is the reign and rule of Jesus really here?" Even we Christians can be tempted to wonder: "Is Jesus the real deal?"
  - ➔ Sadly, these kinds of things can even lead believers to explore other options, and not just other religions, but even other philosophies of life – the so-called certainty of science; the fellowship of human oneness; the spirituality of the earth; or the benefits of believing that there is no God at all.

- ✘ So, what are we to do when we, or someone we know, has questions or concerns or struggles like these?

## **II. We conquer questions/doubts when we see/hear Jesus.**

- ✘ Well, we can learn a lot from John and the answer that he received back from Jesus.

➔ Number one, where did John the Baptizer turn when he was struggling with questions about Jesus? He didn't send his followers out to explore other options or even to try and find answers from worldly "experts" or resources like the internet or TV evangelists. No, he went directly to Jesus; to the One that God, the Father told him was His beloved Son.

- ✘ And what can we learn from Jesus' answer once John's concern came to Him? Two different, yet important things:

➔ First and foremost, Jesus' direct answer has always been and still remains the most dependable – even, and especially when it means we still might have more waiting in front of us. "Is Jesus the real deal?" "Are You the Coming One or are we to await another?" (v. 3) Jesus' own words in Scripture can't be any clearer. "Yes!" John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." That's only one of Jesus' seven "I am" statements recorded in the Bible. He also said, "I am the bread of life" (Jn. 6); "I am the light of the world" (Jn. 8&9); "I am the door" (Jn. 10:7); "I am the good shepherd" (Jn. 10:11); "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn. 11:25); "I am the vine...apart from Me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5).

- ✘ In fact that leads to Jesus' second, less direct but still crucially important answer in verses 4 and 5, "Go and all of you report to John what all of you are hearing and seeing: the blind are gaining their sight and the lame are walking, lepers are being cleansed and the deaf are hearing, and the dead are being raised up, and the poor are having good news preached to them."

➔ All of these are present tense verbs in the original Greek text, meaning that John's followers are actually seeing and hearing Jesus do these miraculous things first hand in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in our Old Testament Reading. Jesus is doing the exact work that God's Word said the Messiah would be doing 700 years earlier.

➔ Talk about a long wait. But in reality that's nothing compared to the 4000 year wait that God's people endured from Yahweh's first promise to Adam and Eve that He would send a Savior, until His birth in Bethlehem. Yet, God's promises always come true – according to His timing and in His perfect way.

- ✘ So, the bottom line for John to take from Jesus' answer is this: "Yes, John, I am the one coming, and I am (present tense) doing all of the work necessary to bring the Father's plan for salvation to its final fulfillment. So John, and all of the rest of you who are My beloved believers, don't lose the faith; don't give up living as I have taught you to live in My Word. For I am still coming. The victory is Mine – and it is yours, through faith in Me."

- ✘ That, my friends, is still Jesus' answer to your struggles and doubts today. So see and hear the saving and life-changing work that Jesus is doing among us right now.

➔ He gives us our identity and destiny in Baptism; He speaks His forgiveness to us in the Absolution and preaching that we hear from the pastor whom He has sent to us; He comes to heal and strengthen us in the Lord's Supper and He proclaims the Gospel of restoration and eternal life into our ears through it all.

➔ Yes, just as it was with John, so it is with us right now. Jesus still does all the work; we don't make it happen. We simply rejoice in what He gives and what He does. So, you name the challenge, the doubt, or the question that is weighing you down while you wait, Jesus is always

the answer. Just go to Him in His Word; see and hear how He is working for you in and through His means of grace.

- ✘ And when you do, you will see that Jesus has already come; His rule and reign is, indeed, already here. God's promise has been fulfilled. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." We have His cross and empty tomb as all the evidence we need for now.

➔ Is there still more to come? Indeed there is – and it will be extraordinary –but while we wait, there is no need to second-guess Jesus or His promises. We already have 6000 years of evidence showing that He can and does fulfill every last promise that He makes.

## **Conclusion**

- ✘ Think of it as you would if you were tailgating at a football game. It may not look like it, but what is tailgating? It's waiting. You are waiting for the kickoff. That kind of waiting though is not negative or uncomfortable or unpleasant, is it. No, because you know the kickoff is coming; that's why you're there.

➔ You can't make it happen or make it come sooner than its appointed time. So, you wait until that time arrives. But while you wait, you make the most of the time; not wasting it by just sitting around by yourself. No, you engage with others about your passion for what is to come; you enrich the time with food and fellowship and memories of both past struggles and great victories.

- ✘ Well, we Christians, we wait for Jesus' return like that. We know He's coming, and His rule and reign is already here at work among us. So we have a reason to gather together in His name; to celebrate with confidence, and make the most of the time that we have before His appointed return.

➔ We know that what is coming is the main event; the reason we are here, but while we wait, we gather together with the family of Christ and we delight in the reality of God's work in and through us for the sake of His creation even now. Yes, while we wait we do not lose heart, but our anticipation and excitement grows, because we know, Jesus is coming! Amen.