

Luke 7:18-35

"Wisdom's Children"

October 20, 2024

1. Intro

- a. Well, it's been a few months since we've talked about John the Baptist
 - i. The last time we heard about him was back in chapter 3, when we saw that he had the AMAZING privilege of getting to baptize the very Son of God
 - ii. As we've stated many times, John was the last in the line of the Old Testament prophets
 1. These great men of ancient days were not perfect men, by any means
 - a. But they were FAITHFUL men, weren't they?
 - i. Well... maybe excluding Jonah I guess
 - b. For the most part, these men were faithful in calling the people of God to return back to the Word of God
 - i. These prophets stood, not just before the kings of Judah and Israel, but also before the kings of foreign lands such as Egypt and Assyria and Babylon
 1. At great danger to their own lives, they accepted the calling that they had been given by God, and they boldly stood before kings and queens with these daring words...
 - a. "Thus saith the Lord"
 2. And for their great boldness, many of these prophets were shunned by the masses
 - a. Many were imprisoned
 - b. And many were executed
 - iii. Sadly, John the Baptist's story would fall right in line with the traditions of these unpopular men
 1. As we saw back in chapter 3, John was indeed liked by the masses
 - a. He was quite the novelty in his day!
 - i. If you remember, God had not spoken through ANY prophets for nearly four HUNDRED years
 1. But now, this man John shows up in the wilderness of Judea, wearing a garment of camel's hair, eating bugs and wild honey, and proclaiming loudly and fearlessly, "Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"
 2. And so the masses, including the Pharisees, went in great crowds out to the wilderness to see what this crazy man was all about
 - a. Many of them would repent
 - b. Many of them would be baptized
 - iv. But eventually, after John preached and baptized for a relatively short season, he also found himself standing before an earthly ruler, Herod the Tetrarch
 1. If you'll recall, this wasn't King Herod, the evil king who had all the baby boys slaughtered in Bethlehem
 - a. After King Herod died, the region of Judea and the surrounding countries were split up by Rome into four districts
 - i. Each of these districts were ruled by Herod's sons

1. And the district that included Jerusalem was ruled by Herod's son, Herod Antipas
 - b. Herod Antipas, much like his father, was an absolute mess
 - i. In the year 26 AD, Herod went to Rome to visit his brother Philip
 1. While he was there, he just happened to fall in love with his brother's wife, Herodias, and things went downhill from there
 - a. Within a very short time, Herod divorced his wife, Phaesalis, Herodias divorced her husband, Phillip, and Herodias and her daughter, Salome, moved to Israel to be with Herod
 - c. The ruler of the people of God had violated one of the commands of God, found in Leviticus 20:21,
 - i. *"If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless."*
 1. John the Baptist, like the prophets of old, saw the wickedness of the ruler of Israel, and he let Herod know all about it
 - a. He went before Herod Antipas, he called him out on his sin, and he called him to repentance
 - d. As you might guess, this didn't go well for John
 - i. As we read in Luke 3:19-20,
 1. *¹⁹But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reprovved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.*
2. So this is where we find John as we look at our passage for today
 - a. The one who came as a new Elijah...
 - b. The one who would prepare the way for the Messiah of Israel...
 - c. The one who had baptized the very Son of God...
 - i. Was now locked up in prison, wondering if somehow, he had gotten things wrong
 1. John the Baptist, the last of God's great prophets, was filled with doubt
 - a. And so we read, starting in verse 18,
2. Luke 7:18-20
 - a. *¹⁸The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, ¹⁹calling 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?" ²⁰And 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?'"*
 - i. As we saw in the last few weeks, Jesus has been quite busy
 1. He's been heling the sick, casting out demons, preaching incredible sermons
 - a. And last week we saw that he has even started raising dead people back to life!
 - i. John's disciples hear about all that Jesus has been doing – maybe they even saw some of it themselves – and they go back to John in prison and tell him all that Jesus was doing
 2. And John responds in an unexpected way, doesn't he?
 - a. You would think that, even though John is in less than ideal conditions, he might have felt some sense of gratification as he heard these things
 - i. Yes, he was locked up in prison

1. But at least the Messiah was out there doing incredible works
2. At least he had been right about Jesus
3. But that's not how he responds, is it?
 - a. Instead, John sends his disciples with the question...
 - i. "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"
 1. Just take a moment and think about where you have to be emotionally and mentally to ask such a question
 2. It is undeniable that John was in a pretty low place
 - a. And we can't fault him for that, can we?
4. John had known his whole life what his role would be
 - a. From even before he was conceived in Elizabeth's womb, he had been set apart to prepare the way for the coming King
 - i. Like most of the rest of the Israelites of those days, John would have been looking forward to a spiritual king for sure, but maybe even more so for a political king
 1. Surely God's Messiah would deliver them from their oppressors
 2. Surely God's King would restore Israel to a position of political power once again
 - ii. But now, Jesus is here, John is in prison, and the wicked still rule
 1. Jesus, are you the one, or did we get it wrong?
 - a. Jesus' response is just as unexpected as John's question was...

3. Luke 7:21-23

a. *²¹In that hour [Jesus] healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. ²²And 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. ²³And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."*

- i. I worry sometimes that we, myself included, have become so familiar with the Scriptures that we let passages like this blow right by us without really dwelling on what just happened
 1. John's disciples ask Jesus, "Are you the one, or should we look for another?"
 - a. And Jesus responds by healing a bunch of people from their diseases...
 - b. Healing people FROM PLAGUES...
 - c. Casting out evil spirits...
 - d. And causing MANY who were blind to receive their sight!
 - i. Do you want an answer to take back to John?
 1. Watch this!!
 - ii. What an incredible display of the power of God
 1. An what an incredible way to answer his doubting friend
 - ii. And Jesus says to John's disciples, "Blessed is the one who is not offended by me."
 1. This word that Jesus used for "offended" is the Greek word *skandalizo*
 - a. That's a familiar sounding word, isn't it?
 - i. It's where we get our word, "scandalous" from
 1. If you think about how we use that word, when you hear about some important person doing something wrong or something immoral and shocking, you would say that their behavior was "scandalous"

- a. We hear these things, and we are offended that someone who we expected to act in one way, instead acted in a completely different way

2. Jesus understood where John's question came from

- a. He knew John's heart for God and for his country and for his people
- b. He knew that, in that moment when John was suffering in prison, his expectations about Jesus were not being met
 - i. Maybe in John's heart, the fact that Jesus wasn't going around confronting Herod Antipas in his sin was beginning to make him offended
 - ii. Maybe in John's heart, the fact that Jesus wasn't denouncing Rome and pushing for a political revolution was causing him to question everything
 - iii. Maybe, in John's heart, it was scandalous that this man who was supposed to be Israel's king, didn't seem to care much about politics
AT ALL

3. But Jesus, in his grace and in his compassion, does not rebuke John for his misplaced assumptions

- a. Instead, he miraculously heals a whole crowd of afflicted people, and he says to John's disciples,
 - i. *22"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. 23And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."*

- 1. Go tell John that there is something MUCH bigger going on here than you could ever have dreamed!

4. So John's disciples leave with this incredible message from Jesus, and then I love how Jesus speaks up to defend his friend

- a. Think about the muttering that must have been going on in the crowd that was surrounding Jesus and John's disciples...
 - i. "Did you hear what John the Baptist sent his guys to ask Jesus?"
 - ii. "Wasn't John the one who baptized Jesus, and said 'Behold the Lamb of God' and all that stuff?"
 - iii. "I thought that John was a PROPHET! But now he doesn't even know if this is the right guy?"

- 1. Well, Jesus wasn't having any of that...

4. Luke 7:24-28

- a. *24When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 25What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. 26What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' 28I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."*

- i. That's a pretty amazing defense, isn't it?

- 1. As the rumblings about John's question began to filter throughout the crowd, Jesus stops them in their tracks

- a. Who did you think you all went out into the wilderness to see?

- i. You KNEW he wasn't some flaky reed that was tossed to and fro by the winds
- ii. You KNEW he wasn't some spoiled rich kid talking about a bunch of stuff he didn't really understand
- iii. You KNEW John was a PROPHET
 - 1. Well I tell you, he is MORE than a prophet
 - a. In fact, he's the prophet that the other prophets said was coming
 - b. He's the one God Himself sent to prepare the way
 - c. And there is no one standing here today that is greater than him!
 - 2. Friends, just on a side note, don't ever forget that THIS is the Jesus who is standing in YOUR corner when the world turns against you
 - a. If you are in Christ, then he is your elder brother
 - i. And he won't stand for ANYONE talking bad about his brothers and sisters
 - 3. So Jesus stands firm in his defense on John's behalf, even though John was dealing with his own doubts and unbelief
 - a. But then he adds a pretty massive tag at the end of his defense, there in the second half of verse 28...
 - i. "Yet the one who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he"
 - 1. Hang onto that statement, and we'll come back to it here in a bit
 - b. So Jesus stood up for his friend, and then Luke inserts an interesting parenthetical statement...

5. Luke 7:29-30

- a. ²⁹*(When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, ³⁰but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)*
 - i. For the most part, the crowds were satisfied with Jesus' response
 - 1. Apparently, many of them had been baptized by John
 - a. So naturally they would be in agreement with Jesus' words about him
 - b. Especially since they no doubt included themselves in the kingdom of God because of that baptism
 - i. But of course the Pharisees and the lawyers have to be difficult, don't they?
 - 1. They rejected John
 - 2. They rejected his baptism
 - 3. And therefore, as Luke says, they rejected the purpose of God
 - ii. It's no wonder that John said to them back in Matthew 3, "You brood of vipers! Who warned YOU to flee from the wrath to come?"
 - 2. And so, at this point we kind of get the sense that Jesus reaches a point of "holy frustration" with the scoffers, as he says starting in verse 31,

6. Luke 7:31-35

- a. ³¹*"To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? ³²They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.'* ³³*For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.'* ³⁴*The Son of Man has come eating*

and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' ³⁵Yet wisdom is justified by all her children."

- i. You can just feel the exasperation in his voice, can't you?
 1. You people are like a bunch of whiny kids that no one can make happy
 - a. These kids just sit around in the marketplace, complaining, "When we play happy songs on the flute, no one dances for us... and when we play sad, funeral songs, no one gets sad. Why won't you just do what we want you to do, Jesus? Or why won't you just say the things we want you to say, John?"
 2. The Pharisees and the other religious leaders didn't care for John's message of repentance
 - a. He wasn't one of them
 - i. He wasn't trained in the elite schools like they had been
 - ii. He didn't have the titles, the position, the prestige that they had earned
 - iii. He was just some nut preaching all sorts of nonsense
 1. And yet, as we noted earlier, the people had gone out to be baptized by him IN DROVES
 - b. So the religious leaders did what all leaders do when their power is threatened... they resorted to slandering John
 - i. He doesn't eat bread... he doesn't drink wine
 1. Therefore, he MUST have a demon
 - a. Now, how they could jump to such an irrational conclusion, I'm not sure
 - b. But then again, a lot of what these religious leaders was not very rational, was it
 3. And again, because they were like a bunch of children that no one could make happy, Jesus exposes their hypocrisy
 - a. John came eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you decided he must have a demon
 - b. But I'VE come eating and drinking, and you call me a glutton and a drunkard
 - i. Which one is it going to be???
 1. The only thing they got right was the fact that Jesus is indeed a friend of tax collectors and sinners
 - a. And while they saw that as a derogatory statement, we hear it as a statement of God's great grace and mercy and lovingkindness towards us, don't we?
 - i. Praise God that his son IS a friend of sinners, or we would ALL be without hope!!
 4. Well, Jesus exposes their double standards
 - a. And then he ends the discussion with a word that is incredibly helpful for us today:
7. Wisdom is justified by all of her children
 - a. Jesus is reaching back to the book of Proverbs as he says these words
 - i. Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to chapter 1 of Proverbs
 1. And we'll see that, in multiple passages throughout the book, wisdom is personified as a woman
 - a. Proverbs is known as "the book of Wisdom"
 - i. That makes sense when we remember that King Solomon was known as the wisest man in all of history

- ii. And he wanted to pass this wisdom on to his son
- b. So, starting in chapter 1, verse 20, we read...
 - i. *20"Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; 21at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks: 22"How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? 23If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you. 24Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, 25because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, 26I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, 27when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. 28Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. 29Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, 30would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, 31therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices. 32For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them; 33but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster."*
 - 1. That is a powerful illustration, isn't it?
 - a. I find it interesting that Jesus compared the Pharisees and lawyers to little children playing their childish and immature games in the marketplace
 - i. And here in Proverbs we see Lady Wisdom ALSO in the marketplace
 - 1. And she cries out above all the clamor and noise,
 - a. "How long will you continue to love being fools?"
 - b. "How long will you continue to ignore my counsel?"
 - c. "How long will you continue to hate my knowledge?"
 - b. But as we see in verse 29, this isn't just a call to pursue **WORLDLY** wisdom
 - i. No, the wisdom that she is calling us to is a pursuit of knowledge that is grounded in **THE FEAR OF THE LORD**
 - c. My friends, **THAT** is the kind of wisdom that we are called to seek after with everything we've got!
 - c. If you flip over to chapter 2, Solomon writes,
 - i. *1My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, 2making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; 3yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, 4if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, 5THEN you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. 6For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding...*
 - 1. In this chapter, and really throughout the rest of the book, we see blessing after blessing promised for all those seek after the Lord's wisdom
 - a. Those who receive wisdom's words will be blessed in their understanding of righteousness and justice and equity
 - b. Those who treasure her commandments will be blessed as knowledge becomes pleasant to their souls
 - c. Those whose ears are attentive to wisdom's instructions will be blessed as they are delivered from the way of evil and perverse men
 - d. Those who seek after her like hidden treasures will be blessed, for they will understand the fear of the Lord
 - i. And they will find the knowledge of God
 - 1. For all **TRUE** wisdom comes from Him!

- d. My friends, do you pursue wisdom with such zeal as Solomon describes here in these passages?
 - i. Do you chase after it as you would chase after silver or gold?
 - ii. Do you mine for it as hidden treasure?
 1. As you all might have figured out by now, I love the writings of the Puritans
 - a. In our Friday morning men's study, we've been going through the book, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by the Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs
 - i. We've spent almost a year now in this book, trying to learn how to be contented Christians
 1. What's incredible is that the entire book is based off of one passage in the Scriptures, Philippians 4:11-13, where Paul writes,
 - a. *¹¹Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹²I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*
2. How is it that a group of guys can spend week after week in ONE book that is just based off of THREE verses?
 - a. It's because Jeremiah Burroughs and the other Puritan writers KNEW what tremendous value there was in WISDOM!
 - i. They were known for grabbing hold of just a couple of verses like these in Philippians, and then they would spend COUNTLESS hours mining the Scriptures to discover all that God had to say about it
 1. They absolutely loved and cherished the wisdom of God
 2. And they chased after the knowledge of Him with everything they had
 - a. But in order to go to such great depths, it cost them dearly in one of our most precious commodities:
 - i. TIME
3. The Puritans were normal people, just like us
 - a. Most of them were married
 - b. Most of them had LOTS of kids
 - c. Most of them had fulltime jobs – either as pastors, or professors, or chaplains
 - i. As we've learned through John Bunyan and Pilgrim's Progress, some were just tinkers and tradesmen
 - d. They had normal lives, with normal obligations and responsibilities
 - i. But they made THE CHOICE to spend much of the rest of their time mining for the gold of the wisdom of God
 1. They were indeed Wisdom's children
 2. And the church has been blessed greatly throughout the centuries by their diligence
- e. So again, I would ask... do YOU pursue wisdom with such zeal and passion, and even delight?
 - i. I'm not saying that every Christian should spend every hour of your free time with your head in a book pursuing the wisdom of God
 1. But when you honestly look at how you spend your time, would we not all agree that the vast majority of that time is NOT spent in chasing wisdom?

- a. And if that is truly the case, does that not put us dangerously close to those who “love being simple?”
 - i. To those who have chosen to ignore wisdom’s counsel?
 - ii. To those who have refused to heed her voice?
 - b. Does that not put us dangerously close to the Pharisees and the lawyers that Jesus was calling out back in Luke 7?
- f. Brothers and sisters in Christ, the Scriptures promise great blessings for those who pursue wisdom
 - i. And it isn’t just the Old Testament that encourages this pursuit
 - 1. As Paul was writing to his young disciple, Timothy, he reminded him in 2 Timothy 3:14-15,
 - a. *¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*
 - i. Paul encouraged Timothy to continue to dig into God’s Word, just as his mom and grandmother had raised him to do
 - 1. Timothy no doubt was already saved,
 - 2. And yet Paul encouraged him to keep digging, because the Scriptures would make him wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus
 - a. We pursue wisdom, because we long to know our God more deeply
 - b. We pursue wisdom, because we yearn for our faith to be strengthened
 - ii. And this brings us back to John the Baptist as we close this morning
 - 1. It’s hard to be too tough on John for asking the question that he did
 - a. Placed in a similar situation, we might very well find ourselves having the same kind of doubts
 - i. Jesus didn’t rebuke John or criticize him for his lack of faith, but we can still learn a valuable lesson from his example, as well as the example of the Pharisees
- g. When we enter into our own seasons of doubt, we all have a choice of three different paths
 - i. The first option is to simply bail on Jesus
 - 1. When we played the flute in the marketplace, Jesus didn’t dance for us
 - a. When we played a dirge, he didn’t get sad with us
 - i. In other words, Jesus didn’t live up to our expectations
 - ii. So he must not really be who he said he was
 - 1. This is the path many are choosing in our day, as it has become an increasingly trendy thing to “deconstruct” your faith, and to free yourself from the shackles of just another man-made religion
 - b. That’s the first option, to reject wisdom, to spurn knowledge, and to turn away from the Lord completely
 - i. Just know that, if you choose that path, as Luke says, you are rejecting the very purposes of the God of all Creation
 - 1. And that is the absolute epitome of folly
 - ii. The second option when we find ourselves in a season of doubt is to allow ourselves to fall into despair
 - 1. This is where John was at

- a. Like the Pharisees, John also had expectations when it came to Jesus
 - i. Those expectations likely never included being thrown in prison for calling Herod out on his sin
 - 1. So John's expectations were not met, and his faith faltered
 - 2. He didn't turn his back on Jesus, but he did begin to second-guess everything
 - a. This man who once had the faith to call the Pharisees to their face a "brood of vipers" now found himself doubting if he'd baptized the right man
 - b. John most certainly knew the fear of the Lord, but his circumstances had caused him to grow complacent in his pursuit of wisdom
 - i. At this point in John's life, he could have used the words that James would write years later, in James 1:5-8
 - 1. *⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶But 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. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*
- c. My guess is that this is where most Christians here in America find ourselves today
 - i. To be honest, our faith isn't really challenged all that much
 - 1. Most of us have never truly faced the refining fires of persecution for what we believe
 - a. So when troubles or hardships come, we very quickly fall into doubt or despair
 - i. "Is God TRULY sovereign over all things?"
 - ii. "Is He TRULY working all things together for my good?"
 - iii. "Is Christ TRULY holding ALL things together, including this trial that I am having to face?"
 - 2. Doubt begins to creep into our heart, and instead of asking God for wisdom, we begin to question who He is
 - a. Instead of turning to the Scriptures and mining deeply for the words that will make us wise for salvation through faith, we instead turn to despair
 - iii. My friends, if you find yourself in a season of doubt, choose the third path
 - 1. Stay away from the path that rejects Christ for who he is
 - 2. Stay away from the path that begins to question Christ for who he says he is
 - 3. And instead, choose the third path
 - a. Get on your knees, and pray to your Father for wisdom – for He gives GENEROUSLY to all, WITHOUT REPROACH
 - i. And when you're done asking God for His wisdom, then get out your shovel and start digging
 - 1. Open the Scriptures and begin to mine deeply into the goldmine of God's Word
 - a. Turn off the TV
 - b. Get off your phone

- c. Get to a place where you can quietly focus on the Word
 - 2. And then begin to search the vast expanses of God's treasure house of knowledge and wisdom
 - b. It is astounding that the God of all the Universe has chosen to communicate His wisdom to us through a book
 - i. We don't have to go to some Temple in the mountains and make a sacrifice or burn some incense, and then hope that we hear a "word from God"
 - 1. We just have to open this incredible Book, and start reading!!
 - c. This is the path of Wisdom's children, Christians
 - i. May you choose to walk that path every day, for the rest of your life!!