

***“The Best is Yet to Come”***

Text: Luke 7:18-28

“I tell you, that 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.” Our text and Gospel lesson for today ends this way. What was Jesus saying? Scholars have debated the meaning of that as well as John’s question: “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”

Jesus is talking about a future day. What John anticipated and prepared for was now here. In no way did Jesus cast doubt on John’s character and faith, nor should we. It is the same Jesus who says that John was more than a prophet and that no one is greater than John. Think for a moment of the position we are in today and what we know that Old Testament people longed to see.

One of our emphases of Advent is that we remember the birth of our Savior. This is the event was long awaited for from Genesis to Malachi. The Epistle to the Hebrews says: “And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had promised something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.” (Hebrews 11:39-40)

As John prepared the people of his day, this is what he was pointing to for all who would hear him and his message. As we live in between the first and second coming of Jesus we live in that joy. What was to come has been accomplished. As we celebrate our position, we know an ever greater day is yet to come for us as God’s children-

## **THE BEST IS YET TO COME**

### **I. There is hope even in times of sadness**

### **II. God's plan overcomes all obstacles**

#### **I.**

**A.1.** During the Thirty Year's War in the 1600's, German pastor Paul Gerhardt and his family were forced to flee from their home. One night as they stayed in a small village inn, homeless and afraid, his wife broke down and cried openly in despair. In order to comfort her, Gerhardt reminded her of Scripture promises about God's provision and keeping. Then, going out to the garden to be alone, he too broke down and wept. He felt that he had come to the darkest hour of his life. At this point he penned one of his many hymns which spoke of God's care even in our deepest sadness.

It is often in our darkest times that God makes his presence known most clearly. He uses our sufferings and troubles to show us that he is our only source of strength. When we see his truth we receive new hope in his timing. Such was the case of John the Baptist in prison: "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" This is not disbelief, but perhaps a faith crisis. We have times when our faith is not as strong as we would like, and this I believe is what John was doing at this time.

**2.** Jesus answers in verse 22 of the evidences of the fact that he was the one to come: "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the good news is preached to them." These were all promises from the Old Testament and marking the coming of the promised Messiah, the one "who was to come." So, yes John Jesus is the one!

All prophets leading up to John had continued to promise of God's own Savior who was to come into the world and the time had come for that to be accomplished. Even though John may have doubts Jesus is assuring John and his disciples as to whom he really is.

**B.1.** In the prophecy of Isaiah we read: “A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench.” (Isaiah 42:3) This is from one of those “Servant” prophecies which speak of the coming Messiah. We talked of this and other passages in confirmation in answer to the question of whether one who weak in faith should approach the Lord’s Table and of course the answer was “Yes”.

Actually this question is asked by John and again through his disciples. At this point, verse 21 tells us that Jesus performed miracles to those who came to them and then commented on John’s question. Regardless of setbacks and troubles in our lives, God is at work and he keeps his promises to us.

**2.** As Jesus performed these miracles, people were restored to the original condition in which God had created them. In it we have a very picture of his original creation in the Garden of Eden and a future picture of what awaits us in heaven.

## **II.**

**A.1.** What does it look like when God comes into our lives? It is often unexpected as we see in the life of John the Baptist. He was imprisoned for speaking God’s word and now wondered what was next and why he was in the position he was. It happens in our lives too as tragedy enters our lives as it did for the Suggs family the other night. What do we a faithful Christian people do at such a time? The disciples asked Jesus one time: “Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?” (John 9:2) Jesus answered that this was an opportunity for the works of God to be displayed in his life, and so they were.

**2.** Sometimes the working of God escapes us because he doesn’t work the way we think that he should. Who would have thought that the prophet who would prepare the way for the Messiah would be like John? As verse 24-25 point out to us, his appearance and message were quite unique. John called the people to repentance. This is never

a popular message in his day or in ours, yet the people still cam out to hear him. As I read the Christmas story each year, I am struck by it with every passing year. Jesus has come into our lives not only according to God's promise, but also according to his plan of salvation. So also, according to his plan he will return again!

**B.1.** The way of God's coming to us may be unexpected but he brings us the greatest joy of all as our salvation is now complete. After talking about John Jesus says: "And blessed is the one who is not offended by me." God's plan of salvation hinges on believing in his Son for who he is as John did and as we do.

Our suffering or setbacks do not change the joy that Jesus brings into our lives. Certainly they are a test of faith as John experienced and as we do from time to time. God's working is not defined and limited by our own definition of how he ought to act in our lives. Having faith and patience in times of difficulty may be hard for us, but our strength and joy lies in our Savior and not in our circumstances.

**2.** Our Old Testament lesson for today concludes: "At that time I will bring you in, at that time I will gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the people of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes.' Says the LORD." (Zephaniah 3:20)

This Sunday in Advent is celebrated as the Sunday of joy. We have the greatest joy of all that a Savior has come to us. Long promised throughout the Old Testament he has come to us. We live in a great time that those saints of old could only dream about. The fulfillment of God's greatest promise is here, yet even a greater day is yet to come. We rejoice in what has happened and what is yet to come! Amen.