

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus is offensive. There has always been something to Jesus that drew even the worst of sinners to Him. But Jesus's preaching also made people furious and offended. After all, Philip Yancey wrote: "How would telling people to be nice to one another get a man crucified? What government would execute Mister Rogers or Captain Kangaroo?"

And Jesus is still offensive today. That offensiveness is not just to one group of people, but to everyone. If Jesus came today preaching the same message people all over the spectrum would be offended. The beatitudes and Jesus' words about the rich and poor would have people calling Him a woke liberal. Jesus' words about sexuality and the exclusivity of salvation would have people calling Him a hateful bigot.

But in our passage this morning in Luke 7:18-35 Jesus says, "**Blessed is the one who is not offended by me.**" We want to study this passage to see how we can get the blessing and how we can avoid being offended by Jesus. In order to do that we need to decide the identities of three people.

Please stand if you are able for the reading of God's Word from Luke 7:18-35.

Point number 1: We must decide who Jesus is (v. 18-23).

This whole passage circles around this question.

Who is Jesus?

It is John the Baptist's question.

It is the question that every single person must answer.

We all have to decide who we believe Jesus is.

We return this morning to John the Baptist.

You might remember him from the first couple chapters of Luke.

He appears once more in this passage and then will not be seen again.

John has heard about all that Jesus is doing.

Verse 18, **"The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, 19 calling 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?"**

John's disciples come to him to tell him about all of the miracles we have been reading and studying.

And John sends two back to ask Jesus one question.

"Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

John is asking about the identity of Jesus.

This is one of the most important questions that we can ask.

Deciding who Jesus is changes everything about your life.

When John says, **"The one who is to come"** He means the Messiah.

He is asking if Jesus really is the promised king.

Is Jesus is the son of David,

Is Jesus is the one all of the promises in Scripture are about?

His disciples are obedient in verse 20, **"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?'"**

They make it clear that their question comes from John.

It comes from the last Old Testament prophet.

The first prophet in hundreds of years.

The one who would prepare the way for the Messiah.

He wants to know if Jesus is the Messiah,

Or if they need to keep looking.

Now we are not sure why John asks this question.

Plenty of ink has been spilled in trying to answer it.

The quick answer is that we just don't know.

Scripture does not tell us.

Some believe John asks because he is doubting and unsure.
Luke 3:20 tells us that John is probably in prison at this point.
He was locked up by Herod for daring to preach against his sin.
Suffering often causes us to doubt.
It makes us wonder if God's promises are true.

And even the greatest of prophets have doubted.
Elijah was so overtaken with despair he asked God to kill him.
It would not be unusual or out of the ordinary for John to doubt.
But the passage in question does not tell us that John is in prison.
That happened way back in chapter 3.
If Luke wanted us to feel John's anguish, then he would have said it now.

Others think that maybe John did this to help his disciples.
Maybe he is trying to help them understand that they should follow Jesus
instead of him.

At the end of the day we don't know.
Scripture does not give us any indication what is going on in John's heart.
We only get his words.

My opinion is that John isn't doubting.
Remember it is still early in Jesus' ministry.
He is still serving Galilee.
He hasn't been all over Israel yet.
He has only begun to work miracles.
He has a few years of ministry ahead of him.
This could be John asking right after He hears about Jesus' miracles.

I think that John just wants his suspicions confirmed.
He wants to be sure that Jesus is the Messiah.

Notice how Jesus responds to John.
He doesn't rebuke him for doubting.

He doesn't tell him to stop questioning Him.
But Jesus also doesn't give a straight answer.
He doesn't even say anything at first.
He just invites them to come follow him around for a day.

Verse 21, **"In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight."**

He does what He has always done.
He heals people of their diseases.
Not just a couple diseases but all of them.
He even cures people of plagues.
We have just experience the plague of covid and it disrupted the world for three years.
Jesus just heals those.

Jesus also casts out evil spirits.
Those held by demons, Jesus kicks them out.
Demonic possession is something that fills horror movies today.
It is a horrifying prospect and we don't know what to do with it.
Jesus does.
He just gets rid of them easily.
It is a normal day at the office for Jesus.

And Jesus **"gives sight to the blind."**
Those who have been unable to see, Jesus heals.
He gives them back their eyes.

After working all of these miracles he turns to answer their question.

Verse 22, **"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."**

Can you imagine?

John's disciples watch miracle after miracle.

Miracles not even their prophet does.

The blind can see.

The lame and crippled are able to walk.

The lepers have been made clean and the shame removed.

The deaf are able to hear.

Even the dead themselves have been raised.

All of this Jesus has accomplished in their own sight.

It is almost like after doing them Jesus turns and says, "What was your question again?"

You see the implication in what Jesus says.

The question is whether or not we will accept the evidence before us.

They should be able to make up their own minds.

It is amazing that Jesus does not give them a simple answer.

He does not just tell them yes obviously.

He also does not rebuke them for their question.

He simply continues His kingdom work and tells them to make a decision.

But these miracles are not just things Jesus does to prove His identity.

They are not something He does to draw a crowd.

They are not only something He does out of love for the people.

He does these works in order to fulfill the Scriptures as well.

The promised Messiah would do these things.

Isaiah 35:5-6, "**Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;**"

Once again Jesus has done all of these things.

It is why Jesus mentions the blind, the deaf, and the lame.

He is quoting Scripture from Isaiah 61.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;"

Jesus just said that is preaching the good news to the poor.

Jesus also read from this Chapter of Isaiah in Luke 4 and said, **"Today this is fulfilled in your hearing."**

Jesus points the disciples back to the prophecies they should know well.

The Scripture said the Messiah would do these things.

Here Jesus is doing those things.

Is He the Messiah?

That is what John's disciples have to decide.

Jesus finishes His answer by saying something strange.

Verse 23, **"And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."**

Your translation may say, **"Blessed is the anyone who does not stumble on account of me."**

Offended is a bit of a buzzword these days so it might help to understand what Jesus meant.

Jesus means that blessed is the person who accepts Jesus as the Messiah.

Blessed is the person who recognizes Jesus for what He is.

Blessed is the person who does not reject Jesus just because He thought Jesus would look differently than He does.

The Jews thought the Messiah would do more fighting with the Romans.

They thought He would lead a rebellion and restore their earthly kingdom.

The Pharisees rejected Jesus because He didn't look like what they thought He should.

He didn't do what they wanted Him to do.

There are still many today who stumble over Jesus.

Those who reject Him because He doesn't fit their idea of God.

They do not know what to do with Him.
Famously you have people like the Jesus seminar of the 80's.
They were a group of scholars who went through the gospels to decide what Jesus really said and did.
Or people like Thomas Jefferson.
Jefferson went through the gospel and removed everything he thought Jesus could have never said or did with a knife.
They were offended by Jesus and couldn't accept Him as He is.

Today, people still are offended.
They will only accept a Jesus who speaks in the political language that they want.
They will only follow a Jesus who doesn't demand too much.
A Jesus who just loves and accepts me without telling me what to do.
A Jesus who speaks harshly against my enemies, but not against my sins.

But at the end of the day Jesus is here.
He has fulfilled the promises of God.
He raised the dead and was Himself raised after His death on the cross.
The question all of us have to decide is who is Jesus?

Is Jesus really God?
Is Jesus really our only way to salvation and new life?
I believe that He is.
But it is up to all of us individually to decide.
Just like John the Baptist and his disciples had too.
We will be offended by Jesus, or will we accept Him as Savior and God?

[transition] We have seen that we must decide who Jesus is. But we also need to decide something about John the Baptist.

Point number 2: **We must decide if who John the Baptist is (v. 24-28).**

Jesus turns after being questioned about His own identity to John.
And what we are meant to do is recognize and decide who we believe John is as well.

Verse 24, **"When 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?"**

He is clearly discussing John the Baptist now.
And Jesus is trying to get after who John is.
John ministered not in synagogues and towns, but in the wilderness.

Jesus asked the crowd what they went into the wilderness to see.
When he says "a reed shaking in the wind,"
Jesus means that they didn't go into the wilderness for the scenery.
They didn't go for a hike just to take in some nature.
The crowds would go and gather to see John the Baptist.
To see what he would say.
To listen to his preaching.
And to be baptized in the wild waters.

I think that phrase a reed shaking in the wind also refers to John's character.
Also means that John was not somebody who is easily shaken or moved.
John could stand strong.
John was willing to rebuke those in power.
John was willing to rebuke even Herod.
John offended those in power and it cost him his freedom.
And John was willing to stay in prison rather than recant or take back what he said.
This was the man people went into the wilderness to see.

Jesus continues in verse 25, **"What 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."**

Jesus goes on to describe John.

John was not what people might expect for a Herald of the Messiah.

John was not somebody who wore regular clothes.

John is not somebody who dressed nice or had the fanciest suit.

John was not somebody who wore the clothes of a palace ruler.

John was someone who wore camel hair.

John did not live in the luxury of palaces.

John did not use his successful Ministry to build himself a mansion.

John lived out on the wilderness.

Ironically, John does currently reside in a palace.

But he does not reside in the courts as the favorite advisor of the rulers.

John does not sit on the throne.

John sits in the dungeons.

John is on death row and he will be beheaded before too long.

Verse 26, "What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet."

So why would they go to the wilderness to see John?

Because he was a prophet.

Because they believe the John was the first prophet in a very long time.

Because John had something to say.

Because John was someone who spoke for God.

You still have people today or willing to travel too far off places to go see someone that they believe is a prophet.

But Jesus says that John was more than a prophet.

John was not an ordinary holy man.

John was not like a regular Monk.

John the Baptist was someone more.

Why would Jesus say this?

Verse 27, **"This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you."**

Jesus is quoting from Malachi 3:1.

That describes the voice calling out in the wilderness who will prepare the way for the Messiah.

And another passage in Isaiah 40:3-5 describes the voice calling out in the wilderness who will make the way straight.

The one who will prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah.

Isaiah 3:4-6 says the same thing.

John is fulfilling the scriptures himself as well.

And John's identity is tied to the Messiah.

But then Jesus said something truly remarkable about John's identity.

Jesus says, that John is not only the Forerunner but John is something more.

Verse 28, **"I 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."**

This is a strange statement.

It almost seems like a contradiction.

Or at least that it doesn't make sense on its face.

John is the greatest man who has ever been born.

But John is also the least in the Kingdom.

What does that mean?

The first part is acknowledging the tremendous blessing that John has.

John has been chosen as the Forerunner of the Messiah.

John has been chosen to be the first prophet in hundreds of years.

John gets to be the one to tell everyone to Jesus is finally coming.

It's one of the greatest blessings someone could have hoped for.

And John gets to experience it.

And Jesus said that there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.
There have been a lot of prophets.
There have been a lot of prophets who have worked miracles.
Elijah and Elisha both worked incredible miracles.
Outside of his birth John hasn't done any.
But Jesus says that he is the greatest.
And John is the greatest because of the one he gets to point to.

Other prophets prophesied hints.
They prophesied things that they didn't even fully understand.
They prophesied bread crumbs to whet Israel's appetite and prepare them
for when Jesus would come.
But now John gets to prepare the main course.
John gets to say behold here comes the lamb who takes away the sin of
the world.
That is why John is called the greatest man ever born among women.

And this doesn't mean that John is greater than Jesus obviously.
Jesus is truly man but He's also truly God.
John is 100% man and that's it.
So of all the men who have been born John what's the greatest.
And the greatest thing about him was that he got to point to Jesus.

But now why the second portion?
Why does Jesus say that the least in the kingdom is greater than he?
This again comes down to who John is.
John is the herald of a kingdom that is to come.
John was the last Old Testament prophet.
John was a member of the old Covenant,
but the New Covenant is coming.

The new kingdom is coming.
The kingdom that John pointed towards will be here.
In our day it is here now.

The smallest member of the kingdom of God is greater than John.
Often as Christians we do not realize how incredibly blessed we have.
We do not recognize the incredible blessing that it is to be born here and now.

We tend to take for granted that we are Christians.
We get to experience things that John only dreamed of.

Jesus says that the blessings that John got to experience as being the herald of the Messiah is less than everything all of us get to experience.
The newest Christian who has been saved for less than 5 minutes is experiencing more blessings than John the Baptist got to.

Remember as well John is going to die.
John dies before Jesus inaugurates the kingdom.
John dies before Jesus is crucified resurrected and ascends.
John dies before the Holy Spirit descends like a dove once again and fills every follower of Jesus.

John is much like those listed in Hebrews 11 who had Faith but didn't get to see what was promised.

Abraham was promised a great nation but only had one son.

Moses heard the promises of the promised land but he never got to set foot inside.

David was promised that his line would rain forever but when he died his family was a bit of a mess.

And John will die before he gets to see the promises that he's made fulfilled.

"though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised."

But we have received it.

We see all of the promises that they longed for.

All of the visions, dreams, and answers to prayer.

We have a greater blessing than all of them.

If you could, how many of you would switch places with John the Baptist?
I'd raise my hand.

I want to be John the Baptist.

I want to get to baptize thousands and lead a revival.

I want to be a prophet and to be filled with the spirit and speak for God.

I want to be someone who gets to fulfill promises in Scripture.

I would love to be somebody who would get to see and be around Jesus.

To get the privilege of baptizing our savior.

I want to trade places with John in a heartbeat.

Part of what Jesus is saying is that John would trade places with any of us.
Because the blessings that we get to experience on this side of the cross
or greater than all the John got to do and see.

That is what it means.

Jesus's comment is not really about how awesome John the Baptist is,
it is about how awesome it is to be a citizen of the kingdom of God.

So we have to decide who John is.

John is a herald of the Messiah.

What's the sign if you really do think that John pointed to Jesus.

But we also have to decide if Jesus is right about John.

If getting to be a citizen of the kingdom of God really is greater than
anyone in the Old Testament could have ever imagined.

[Transition] We have to decide who John the baptist is. And finally we turn
to our own identities.

Point number 3: **We must decide who we will be (v. 29- 35).**

What I mean by that is that we have to decide if we are going to believe in
Jesus.

Will we be Christians?

Will we be followers of Christ?

Will we be Believers in Jesus?

Or will we not?

Will we be offended by Christ and will that keep us from salvation?

Verse 29, **"(When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, 30 but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)"**

There are two reactions from the people.

Some of the people accept Jesus.

They **"declare God just."**

This means that they see how God has fulfilled His Scriptures and say amen.

They believe it.

And they believe it because of John's ministry.

They were baptized with a baptism of repentance.

They were prepared by John to receive Jesus.

And now that Jesus is here, they believe.

But others **"Rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him."**

Some were not prepared.

They were not baptized.

They did not repent and now they do not believe.

Notice who does believe.

The hated and sinful tax collectors believe.

The religious elite do not.

Verse 31, **"To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? 32 They 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."

Jesus actually insults this generation.

He says that they are like children.

They are like children who are playing and cannot decide what they want.

I don't know if you have played with little children lately, but someones they cannot decide what they want.

Especially when they are two.

Especially when they are my children.

Sometimes they have moments where they cry and say, "Daddy, I want to wear pants."

So you put on pants.

Then they cry and say "No not those pants!"

And I try to say, "You picked out those pants."

So we take off pants.

Then more tears, "I want those pants."

The pants that we just took off.

This is basically what this generation is.

This is what Jesus says they are like.

They complain about everything that Jesus is.

Everything that God has done.

They want something else.

But even if they got it, they would find a way to be offended by it.

Verse 33, **"For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.'"**

The people have been praying and longing for a prophet.

But when John comes, they don't like him.

John is like a monk.

He doesn't drink wine and spends lots of time fasting.

He eats little and lives in a wilderness

So the people reject him and say he has a demon.

They get the opposite of John with Jeuss, but they still complain.

Verse 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!'"**

Jesus doesn't fast he eats and drinks.

And instead they complain about Him.

They are like toddlers who don't know what they want.

Verse 35, **"Yet wisdom is justified by all her children."**

This means that those who are wise will act like it.

Those who have the right spiritual perspective, will receive Jesus.

The reality is that there are people who will always reject Jesus.

They will not accept God.

It does not matter what God does.

It does not matter who preaches to them.

They will always find fault and complain.

But the free offer of the gospel is here.

Every single sinner can be justified by the blood of Jesus.

We don't need a God who looks like us.

We don't need a God who can make us happy.

We need a God who can make us righteous and clean.

Only Jesus can do that.

Only Jesus did that.

Don't be offended by Him, receive Him as your Savior.

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] We must decide who Jesus is. We must decide who John the Baptist is. We must decide who we will be.
2. [Challenge] Who will you be? Will you be offended by Jesus? Or will you receive Him as He actually is in all of His glory and become a follower of Christ?