

09.21.25

Luke

Chapter 7 - An Unbelievable Faith

Faithfully Declaring God's Righteousness (vs. 24-35)

Luke 7:24-35: When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal palaces! But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,

‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’

I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God’s justice, having been baptized with

the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John. "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.' For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon!' The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

We're surrounded by people that are highly capricious, given to change. From one moment to the next, they seem to be fickle. One thing could be popular at one moment, the next moment, something completely different. People could be praising you one moment, and they could be hating you the next. It's hard to know

what they're thinking. It is in this world that we live, and in this particular passage, Christ makes known that most people are unstable, inconsistent, and impulsive. The things that they do are not based on truth, which never changes, is absolute, but is based on their whims of the moment. It is a strange world, and we see how volatile. I mean, clearly, as Scripture says, as was repeated, the wicked are like the tossing sea. They just can't be quiet. They can't be, because they're like a tossing sea. They're driven and tossed by the wind. And so, if the wind blows a certain way, that's where it goes. If the wind blows another way, that's where it goes. And that's the world. Strangely enough, we actually think that we can vote on what's right. We think that we can delegate to God what is good and what is gracious. And so, we begin to define God for him, in case He didn't know, what He needs to be doing in any given situation. And what we oftentimes find is that we're clearly off base.

The interesting thing about the passage that we're going to be looking at today is that it deals with a dichotomy

of sorts or a paradox in which what we're dealing with is the kindness, as Paul would say in Romans 11:22, “Behold the kindness and the severity of God.” It's hard for us to put the two together. And on one end of the scale, I think many people say, “Well, God is just love. You know, it's not about, you know, you sin, you can't condemn us. You know, people continue to go on and sin, and God approves of this.” And it's just not true. God is righteous, God is holy, and sin is an offense to Him. So, to perceive in any way that it's just all about the lovingness of God would be erroneous. In fact, to perceive that justice and righteousness is not love would be erroneous. And I think that's oftentimes the conclusion that we come to. “Behold the kindness and severity of God.” (Romans 11:22)

So, as we come into this passage, what we're seeing as we've been going through is just this thing that God is drawn to. And we like to think in terms of, “Well, I'm such a good person. I can understand why God just couldn't refuse me into heaven.” And God says, “You all have to come on your knees. You all have to surrender.”

Unless you repent, you can't see the kingdom of God, and really, it's foundational. And we have these interesting pictures, especially in Chapter 7, where we have this centurion, and Jesus goes, “This centurion has more faith than anybody else in Israel.” And we go, “Okay, he didn't go to theological school. He didn't have all these benefits of the background.” And nevertheless, Jesus is saying, “I like this guy.”

We have a woman, and here she is, a widow, and her only son has died, who lost her husband, now she's lost her son. Why does Jesus zero in on this woman?

Well, the way it's put in Psalm 34:18, it says,

(Psalm 34:18) “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

God is searching for people that will come to Him. We know that because Scripture tells us in Chronicles, “the eyes of the Lord search to and fro throughout all of the earth,...looking for a heart that's wholly His.” Who is He drawn to? Is He going to find them necessarily in the cemeteries or seminaries? Is He going to find them in those particular areas or is He going to find them in

places where you would least expect it? I mean, a Roman soldier, who would expect that? Who would expect that Jesus be born around shepherds and that it would be a guy in the mountaintop that would actually “prepare the way of the Lord,” that is to say, John the Baptist? That He would choose fishermen? Why would He do such a thing? We begin to realize that God is looking for those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth, and those are the ones who are crushed in spirit. Those are the ones who have humbled themselves before God.

The way that it's put so aptly in Matthew 5:3 is,
(Matthew 5:3) “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

I mean, unless you humble yourself, you're not going to be able to see the kingdom of heaven.

So, all the way through, we realize that Jesus will pay attention to a woman at the well who's a Samaritan, who's an outcast, who's been married so many times. Why? Why is He drawn to this woman? Because she's genuine and she's seeking Him in spirit and in truth.

And so, He turns to her and says that very thing, “My Father's been searching for those who worship Him in spirit and in truth.” She's a transparent person. She wants the truth. Well, oftentimes, we read such a thing as that and we begin to think that, “Well, God doesn't care about our sins. It doesn't matter if we're a horrific sinner. God is drawn to us.” Here again, we couldn't be further from the truth in that. God does care. In fact, the woman that was caught in the act of adultery, what does He tell her at the end? “Go and sin no more.” But it is about forgiveness. Our whole thing is about forgiveness. It's about the grace of God. It's about the mercy of God. It's about His goodness, not about ours. Yet we kind of want to throw in there, well, as Paul will write to the Romans, the Romans are going, “Well, then we can sin that grace may abound,” you know? This is like a license to us. And so, man just continually battles with this.

In Luke 7, we have John the Baptist, and he sends his messengers to Jesus, and he goes, “We just need to know, are You the one?” Because the Law, which John

is representing, doesn't seem to match up to what Jesus is doing. The great prophecy of John the Baptist's coming is seen, actually, it reads in verse 27,

(Luke 7:27) “This is the one about whom it is written...”

It's making reference to John the Baptist.

“... ‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’”

So, Jesus is actually saying through John the Baptist, this prophecy is being fulfilled.

Well, have you read that prophecy in the Old Testament? Let's read it together. It's found in Malachi 3, and it'll almost seem like we're just re-quoting that text.

(Malachi 3:1) “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me...”

Okay, but did you read the rest of it?

Because if you look in verse two, it says,

(Malachi 3:2) “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.”

He's going to scrub you clean, isn't He? So, how is He going to do that?

That prophecy then goes on, if you look in Malachi 4:1, (Malachi 4:1) “For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of hosts...”

Well, this sounds so gracious, doesn't it? I feel the mercy just oozing out of the text.

“... says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.

(Malachi 4:2) But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.

(Malachi 4:3) You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet...”

I can imagine John the Baptist going, “Yeah, that's what I hope to do to Herod.”

“... on the day which I am preparing,” says the LORD of hosts.

(Malachi 4:4) “Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.”

“Don't forget the law.” That's what the text is saying.

(Malachi 4:5) “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.”

That literally is a quote out of Luke 1:17 in reference to John the Baptist. And Jesus says, “If you care to believe it, Elijah has come.”

(Malachi 4:6) “He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

All of this, if John is perceiving that he's a fulfillment of this, which Christ is clarifying, if he hadn't known up to this point, you would have to think that your job is to make everybody clean, and if they don't get clean, they

get burned. It just makes a whole lot of sense. Jesus is coming around, and it seems like just arbitrarily healing anybody and everybody. I mean, He seems to be gracious to people that, do you have any idea where these people have been? And that's going to actually come into the passage as we go along a little bit further. But it's hard to perceive that God has this magnificent standard of righteousness, and you can't break this. And yet, in the midst of this, you have this wonderful grace. And of course, John is having difficulty perceiving, "How can He be the Messiah if this is not being fulfilled this way?" Well, of course, Jesus conveys to all that are around Him. He says, "Look, the declaration is that I'm healing people. People are being made well. Those that are demon-possessed, those that are lame are walking. Everything is happening according to My promise." Our thoughts are, at this juncture that Jesus would then turn and say, "So, don't listen to John because he's just a little bit overboard on that law thing." You know? "What you need to do is just concentrate on following Me." But He doesn't.

He then, in this passage, begins to emphasize the importance of John, and it is this point that we want to pick up in Luke 7:24.

(Luke 7:24) “When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?”

We would probably put the phrase, “Were you looking for a pushover? Because that's not who John is. That's not what I called him to be. I called him to stand firm in the truth of righteousness.” And so, when he comes on the scene, he says, “Repent. You need to repent of your sins.” This is the beginning of the gospel. It's hard for us to perceive that it would be about confessing sin. You don't want to talk about sin. We want to talk about the love of God. Well, we can talk about the love of God after we talk about sin.

Beginning of Mark, if you look with me, the Gospel of Mark in Mark 1, actually kind of begins with John the Baptist coming on the scene. And I like the way that it begins because it tells us the beginning of the gospel.

It reads this way in verse 1,

(Mark 1:1) “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

The beginning of the gospel. What is it?

(Mark 1:2) “As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:
“BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU,
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY;

(Mark 1:3) THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE
WILDERNESS,

‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’”

(Mark 1:4) John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness
preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness
of sins.”

You go, “Wow, repentance, what you're saying is I actually have to repent?” Yeah, it goes beyond Jesus getting you. It goes into the realm of you need to get Jesus. And this whole idea of, “God sympathizes with your sin.” No, He sympathizes for you. But sin is a horrific thing. And so, the whole thing about salvation

has to begin with, sin is a horrific thing. It has to begin at that place. Because without it, the gospel is really impotent in the sense of, what are you being saved from? You're a good person? Is that what you're being saved from?

So, if you go back to Luke 7, Jesus begins to say, “You're looking for different things.” You're maybe looking for somebody that you could push around; you can tell them what to do; you can tell them what to think. John was sent to tell you what the truth was. And let me emphasize this, in many respects, that's the calling of the church. We are the “pillar and support of the truth.” What is the truth? Well, there are certain things that are actually wrong to do. Is adultery wrong? Yes! The world wants you to go, “Well, it's okay.” You're going to come to church and you're going to find it's not okay. It's a horrific thing. It's a hurtful thing. It's a destructive thing. You should die for it. Literally, Biblically, you should die for it. Why? Because you've done something worse than even taking, I believe, a life. You've destroyed a life, and you continue to destroy that life. So, it's such a

horrific thing. Nevertheless, we go, “Oh, don't say anything about... homosexuality. That's not politically correct.” It's a sin. Scripture tells you it's a sin. It will destroy lives around you. Stop doing it! “Go and sin no more.” See, so, Scripture's very clear about God's not trying to get rid of the law. He's fulfilling the Law through Christ. So, it's not the law in and of itself. He says, “I chose to make the Law glorious in the Old Testament.” He says, “But there's something even greater than the Law here.” So, as we come to this, what you begin to realize is that people want to hear certain things. They want to manipulate the truth, and many people go out to hear somebody that they can push around and intimidate to say what they want. And quite frankly, I've seen the churches do this. I've seen the churches compromise much of the truth because, “We don't want to offend anybody.” Well, to me, they're just reeds shaken by the wind. You know, if somebody blows on them, they start shaking, and a bunch of cowards.

But it goes on and says in verse 25,

(Luke 7:25) “But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? ...”

Somebody dressed in an impressionable royal apparel that in some ways just wows you. It's sort of like a Herod in Acts 12, where he was glittering and everything and everybody's calling out, “It's a god!” But I think a lot of times people come and they like to see the messenger so embellished that they perceive that “Maybe this guy could help me. Maybe he can be my benefactor. Maybe he can show me the way that I can be rich too.” And I think people come to hear a message in which they're looking for somebody that's splendidly clothed, they live in luxury, they're found in royal palaces, and they'll gravitate towards those churches that will convey that message.

Then He lastly puts it in verse 26,

(Luke 7:26) “But what did you go out to see? A prophet? A messenger of God? “Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet.””

Why would he be more than a prophet? Because he actually begins to proclaim the One that has come, “Behold, He's here. How magnificent.”

You look in 1 Peter, if you look there with me, in 1 Peter 1, Peter writes that the prophets of old were prophesying things that oftentimes they didn't understand what they were prophesying.

(1 Peter 1:10) “As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries,

(1 Peter 1:11) seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

(1 Peter 1:12) It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.”

What a great passage. The prophets of old. What is this we're telling people? We don't know. We know there's a

Messiah. We don't know how this is going to work. And John comes on the scene. He goes, “Here He is. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” What a message this guy has. So, His declaration is, “I say, this is one that is great, more than all the prophets.”

In verse 28, it reads this way,

(Luke 7:28) “I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John...”

Why would He use that phrase, “born of women”?

Because later on, of course, Jesus will say in John 3, “You've got to be born in the Spirit. You have to have a new birth.” So, that which is born of the flesh, that is to say, in the realm of the law, is going to be great. You can be great as you proclaim the law, but far greater is the one born in the Spirit, whose heart does the law.

So, the way that it's put in the passage is,

“I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

Why? He has the Spirit of God's Son; not simply a messenger of God. He's God's son. What a wonderful thing that is.

Then it says in verse 29,

(Luke 7:29) “When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God’s justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.”

What is the baptism of John? Baptism of repentance. That is to say that they began to hear that they need to repent, and guess what they did? They repented. Pharisees came and John goes, “You need to change your life. You need to think differently.” But they were unwilling to do that. But the tax gatherers and those that were just the riffraff of society, they did something very unique. They humbled themselves. And in humbling themselves, they accepted the fact that they were sinners. They actually believed that. And they could be saved. The purpose of the Law is to demonstrate that you are a sinner. Man gets so full of himself that he thinks, once again, “I can earn my way, or I can be great, or I can be good.” And then the other

side of that is, “God doesn't even really care about what's right or what's wrong.”

Romans 3, if you look there with me, I think defines it best as you look at this passage as it begins to convey, and really what Paul is dealing with within the passage are those that are saying that they're really righteous people, but really they're not. They're just using the Law to be condescending and critical.

But as Romans 3:10 will remind us,

(Romans 3:10) “as it is written,

“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

(Romans 3:11) “THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

(Romans 3:12) ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER

THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,

THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

(Romans 3:13) “THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,

WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,”

“THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS”;

(Romans 3:14) “WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS”;

(Romans 3:15) “THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD.”

And I would say, their mouth isn't always full of cursing and bitterness. It's just sometimes, because sometimes to your face they'll flatter you. But of course, James will talk about that duplicitous kind of speech and way of living, that you're just trying to manipulate people in that.

(Romans 3:14) ““WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS”;

(Romans 3:15) “THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

(Romans 3:16) DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS.”

Once again, all you have to do is look behind people and say, “I don't know what's behind them. What have they created? I mean, you could have a person that's a Bible scholar or a Bible teacher. All you have to do is

look behind them. Are they true followers of Christ? Because what you're going to find is that they'll be bringing forth good fruit. But if not, their feet are swift to be destructive. Misery is in their paths.

(Romans 3:17) “AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.”

(Romans 3:18) “THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”

Oh, that's a key. And this is one of the things that Jesus is bringing out. This John is a necessary ingredient to the gospel. What is that? God is a holy and righteous God. That's a necessary ingredient of the gospel.

(Romans 3:19) “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed...”

What does the law do? It closes your mouth. “I'm pretty g...” That doesn't let it get out.

“... that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

(Romans 3:20) because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight...

You see, the wonderful thing about the Law is it literally describes the standards of God. And if you get serious about the Law and you actually start reading it, you realize, “I didn't do that. I didn't do that. Uh-oh, I did that.” And you begin to read the Law and you realize, “I have offended God.” That's what the Law does. Up to that point, once again, you might be feeling differently, and I think that's one of the reasons why a lot of people don't like going to church because, you read a certain passage and they go, “That made me feel bad.”

Precisely! That's what we're wanting to do. Because until you feel bad, you can't feel good. There can't be a cleansing.

“Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”

You say, “I already knew what's wrong.” Yeah, you chose what was wrong. And yes, you have a conscience, but you sear your conscience. So, what

the Law does is it awakens that sense of, you know this to be wrong. See, once again, people want the church, “Be silent about sin.” Somebody sinned. Why is the church so hard on it? Because until you come to the point of repentance, you can't be saved. You can't sit in that sin and declare yourself righteous and that you're accepted before God and say, “God is good with that.” You've got to come before God and go, “I'm a sinner.” Will He save you? Yes! But you have to humble yourself, and the purpose of the Law is to bring you.

Now, of course, the passage goes on to say,
(Romans 3:21) “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested...”

How is that?

“... being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
(Romans 3:22) even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ...”

In other words, we actually get to see what it looks like to be righteous, Jesus Christ. There is no sin found in Him at all. And now, He takes it another level into not

only the righteousness of God, but the love of God. And so, He becomes the just and the justifier to save you.

It's a wonderful picture that He begins to paint within this setting and all the way through the Book of Romans, in fact, in Romans 7 as well, it goes on and says this. But I want you to look in Chapter 10 in particular, as Paul is concerned for the Pharisees in particular.

(Romans 10:1) “Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.

(Romans 10:2) For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.”

In other words, more specifically, they don't understand how God thinks. You know how people, once again, will oftentimes say, “I'm a pretty good person. I think God's pleased with me.” Okay, you don't know how God thinks. What we want to do is we want to lower the standards, or we want to twist the standards to fit us.

And the way it reads, it goes on this way,

(Romans 10:3) “For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own...”

That's exactly the world we're living in today. You know, professing to be wise, they're becoming fools. But beyond that, they have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. And I would say they have a form of godliness, but it isn't godly. It's about benevolence. It's about actually putting up with sin. So, if you're tolerant, you're a righteous person. These are all the definitions that they like to put into this. And people like to redefine God. God's standards have not changed. God doesn't change. So, the standards are still the same. But there are those that are seeking to establish their own righteousness, and because of that, they will not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

Now, it goes on and says in verse 4,

(Romans 10:4) “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness...”

The point is, that there is a fulfillment of the Law, there is a goal to the Law, and it is complete righteousness.

In other words, “God doesn't expect complete righteousness.” Oh, yeah. But there's only one way to get it, and that's through Christ. This is why it is so important that the church never back away from right and wrong. Because what the world wants to do is it wants to literally declare, “You're not a bad person, you don't even need a Savior.” I mean, we actually believe that when Scripture says that you and I need to “love God with all of our heart, soul, and strength,” we actually believe that God means that. So, that's like not an option. So, for you not to do that is a sin. You've sinned grossly. I mean, have you put God in front of everything? When Scripture tells you, Leviticus 19, that you need to love your neighbor just like you love yourself, He's not talking about just the people you like. He's talking about your neighbor. Those people who surround you. You've got to like them as much as you like yourself. “Well, I don't think I did that.” Well, then you sinned. See? I mean, Jesus comes on the scene in Matthew 5, and He goes, “Yeah, you know that thing called adultery?” “Yeah, we haven't done that.” He goes, “Did you think it?” And you go, “You're kind of

raising the standards.” He goes, “That's the standards always. The standards have never left this place.” So, all the way through, we see this.

There's an interesting passage in Romans 13, if you look with me, since we're in Romans.

(Romans 13:8) “Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.”

(Romans 13:9) For this, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”

What is He saying? He's saying, if you walk in love, you'll fulfill all the law. You'll never commit adultery, right? You'll never murder somebody, never steal from somebody, hate somebody in your heart. You'll never steal.

(Romans 13:10) “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

So, what the Law does, as Paul will write in Galatians, it's a tutor to lead us to Christ. It points to the One who fulfills the law perfectly, but then it also points that you need a Savior to bring the fulfillment to yourself.

So, as we pick up in Luke 7, He really is elevating the work and the ministry of John and the very fact that when people came and they confessed their sins and repented at John's baptism, they were declaring that God is more righteous than they were. They accepted the righteousness of God. That's why they were baptized. That's why they repented, because they actually believed that God was superior to them. That's pretty amazing to believe something like that. But there you have it.

And He goes on to say,

(Luke 7:30) “But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God’s purpose for themselves...”

What was God's purpose? That they would repent and be saved. It's a pretty obvious desire for God.

“... not having been baptized by John.”

(Luke 7:31) “To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like?”

(Luke 7:32) “They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another...”

Their source of acceptance and validation is really one another. You know, “What do you think?” What does that matter, “what do you think?”

“They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.’

(Luke 7:33) “For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon!’”

That, “He's an evil, malevolent spirit, that he comes just making our life miserable.” Why? Because he's telling you, you have to obey the law. That makes your life miserable. I mean, why have the law? Why have this thing called condemnation of the law? Why have the prophets of the law austere, severe individuals? Elijah wasn't necessarily a likable guy. He wasn't Mr.

Charismatic any more than Elisha was, any more than you consider Isaiah or Nahum. Obviously, Jonah wasn't that likable to the Assyrians. Zephaniah, he goes, "The great and terrible of the day is going to come when you're all going to be wiped out!" And we say, "Why have this?" Because it's a forerunner to Christ. Until you are completely lost and completely devastated and come to the total deprivation of who you are, you won't cling to the old, rugged cross of grace and mercy. You perceive it as maybe an interesting story that comes, but you realize just how totally deprived you are; you'll love God more than anything. I mean, you'll say over and over again, every day you'll say to yourself, "Why did He love me?" And this is fundamentally the big question that we deal with.

I mean, Ephesians 2:8-9, tell us, "Look, it's by grace that you've been saved. It's through faith." It goes on and says, it's not of ourselves, which is really kind of a stumbling block to a lot of people, because "You mean I had nothing to do with it?" No, you didn't have

anything to do with it. It is the gift of God, not of your works. You can't brag about this thing.

Titus will put it this way, that He saved us not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but it was according to His mercy. Now, once again, if you just realize how lost you are, then you'll realize how marvelous His mercy is to you. If you don't perceive that, and the law has to come to really demonstrate, and you say, “Well, why would God love me that much? Why would He ever love me?” And I go, “Okay, that's a scratcher.”

But Ephesians 2:4 kind of reveals to us why He does.

It reads this way,

(Ephesians 2:4) “... because of His great love with which He loved us.”

Because of His great love with which He loved us. Now, that's inexplicable that He loved us that much, but it actually is telling us why He saved us. Because of His great love, not because of your great goodness, but because of His great love with which He loved us. Because God loves that powerfully, that He can

overcome. While we were yet sinners, Christ would die for us, and He would rescue us. And so, you begin to see the necessity of this. Of course, what the world wants to do is, it wants to define so that it can do whatever it wants to do. They're like capricious children that come. And He says, "Who am I going to compare this generation to?"

(Luke 7:32) "They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.'

(Luke 7:33) "For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon!'

(Luke 7:34) "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'"

He ends the text this way, and this is an important passage in verse 35,

(Luke 7:35) "Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

When you read in Proverbs in the Old Testament, you understand that what he does in that Proverbs is he actually personifies wisdom as a woman, and those who listen to wisdom are like the children of wisdom in the sense that they listen to the things that wisdom is telling them to do.

Let me just give you an example of this, if you look with me in Proverbs 1. Proverbs 1, to just kind of give you that introduction.

In case you haven't marked it in your Bibles, maybe verse 7 would be a good one,

(Proverbs 1:7) “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...”

Why the Law first? Because you have to come to the point of shaking in your boots and realizing exactly where you stand. And once you understand how great God is and how dust you are, you begin to marvel that He would even think about saving you. This is what saves the soul.

You drop on down, and you hear wisdom talking. In fact, wisdom is crying out, verse 20,

(Proverbs 1:20) “Wisdom shouts in the street,
She lifts her voice in the square;

(Proverbs 1:21) At the head of the noisy streets she
cries out;

At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her
sayings:

(Proverbs 1:22) “How long, O naive ones, will you love
being simple-minded? ...”

“Airheads” would be another way of putting it.

“... And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing
And fools hate knowledge?”

(Proverbs 1:23) “Turn to my reproof...”

You want to hear who the real fool is? Somebody that won't take correction. I see this all the time. I mean, eventually, once again, I'm going to offend you because I'm going to read a passage or I'm going to say something that I believe that the Bible says that is harmful to you, and it's going to go against your way of living. If you're wise, you'll go, “Thank you.” If you're foolish, you'll get mad, you'll try to save face, you'll hide

in a little corner, and you'll stop following God. But if, in fact, you love God, then you accept the righteousness of God. See, the problem is people don't want to come to God because they go, “Well, He's righteous. I don't like His scale.” He saves you, yes, but He's calling you to walk with Christ. He's calling you to imitate Jesus.
(Ephesians 5)

As you go on, it reads this way,

“... Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you;
I will make my words known to you.

(Proverbs 1:24) “Because I called and you refused,
I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention;

(Proverbs 1:25) And you neglected all my counsel
And did not want my reproof.”

(Proverbs 15:12) “A scoffer does not love one who
reproves him,
He will not go to the wise.”

(Proverbs 15:33) The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom,
And before honor comes humility.”

Why the Law first and then Christ? Because before salvation comes humility. There has to be a brokenness that comes.

And so, it goes, “But the time is going to come because you didn't listen to me, that you're going to find yourself in trouble, and I'm not going to answer anymore.”

So, it says this,

(Proverbs 1:27) “When your dread comes like a storm
And your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
When distress and anguish come upon you.

(Proverbs 1:28) “Then they will call on me, but I will not answer;

They will seek me diligently but they will not find me,

(Proverbs 1:29) Because they hated knowledge
And did not choose the fear of the LORD.

(Proverbs 1:30) “They would not accept my counsel,
They spurned all my reproof.

(Proverbs 1:31) “So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way

And be satiated with their own devices.

(Proverbs 1:32) “For the waywardness of the naive will kill them,

And the complacency of fools will destroy them.

(Proverbs 1:33) “But he who listens to me shall live securely

And will be at ease from the dread of evil.”

But you have to accept the righteousness of God.

Salvation is you coming before God, and saying, “I am a sinner. Have mercy on me, a sinner.” And God will.

That's unbelievable, I know, but He will. But He's just wanting you to admit it. See? And wisdom is

vindicated. The best way to put this is wisdom is actually shown to be righteous by all her children. The

question, once again, is what does it produce? You

know, I've seen people that were full of themselves,

and here again, you watch that arrogance, and then you

look behind the arrogance, and you say, “What have

they produced? What are the children that are coming

from there?" And you realize, rebellious, hateful, unbelievers. You watch others that had maybe come literally out of the gutter, and they receive Christ, and by virtue of the Spirit of Christ, by them accepting wisdom, which says, "You're a sinner," and they go, "I believe you. I am a sinner." And they repent and they receive the gift of God. They don't question God. They don't try to figure it out. They just do what He says. They prove righteousness and they're vindicated by what follows them. And I have seen people come out of horrible things, and I watch what comes behind them, and their lives begin to touch other people's lives and you see souls being saved, and you see lives being changed, and you go, "Now, that is wisdom vindicated." We have opportunity to come before the Lord, and as the Word is preached, it's not telling you to compromise your sin, it's not telling you to ignore your sin, it's not telling you that there's no such thing as sin. It's telling you that there is sin. It's horrible, it's a horrific thing, and the church needs to proclaim against it. But our message is, "But Jesus saves." And if you realize

both, what wonderful harmony it is, and what a great healing it can bring.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and we ask You to do a transformation in our lives. Take us out of the realm of our selfishness and our self-desires and draw us near to You today. Father, we come admitting the truth that there is none righteous, not even me, and we accept Your standards as far above ours, though we might be able to twist and maneuver and somehow distort Your word into saying that we were good people; we know deep down in our hearts that we're just lying to ourselves. That Your standards have never changed, and right is right, and wrong is wrong. But we accept this. And we accept the fact that there's absolutely no way that we could ever be saved in our own power, in our own strength, in our own righteousness. So, we come to You, and we cry out, "Save us." And you'll save

a centurion. You'll save a tax collector. You'll save anybody if they come.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, we're asking you to not excuse sin, but to admit it; to not declare your righteousness, but to receive God's.