Text: Luke 7:18-28

**Introduction**

Last week I said that you had to go through John the Baptist to get to the manger, or I made an argument for that. You have to hear the apocalyptic sayings. “The axe is already at the root of the tree.” The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. Now I know there are all kinds of good arguments that is it really love that moves us. And ultimately that is the case. If all we were was afraid of God, there is nothing to differentiate His from any other demon. But the true fear of God – that apocalyptic fear John proclaimed – “You vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath” – that fear is not just at the power, but the righteous power. The judgement is given and it is just. Like the thief on the cross, “we are being punished justly.” That’s usually the first effect of the Kingdom of Heaven drawing near.

And like the seed that falls on rocky soil, the repentant soul convinced of the nearness of the Kingdom springs up quickly. It prepares the way, or seeks to prepare the way. Reforming life in accordance with the coming Kingdom. Love the LORD and love your neighbor.

But there is a big difference between the seed that falls on rocky soil and that which falls on good soil. The rocky soil never puts down roots. And as the days move on withers because it has no root. This is the difference between living the faith out of fear, and living it out of love. And you can only really love that which you know. And I think this is the second scene with the Baptizer.

**Text**

He’s locked in prison. He’s taken that apocalyptic message all the way to the palace. And Herod threw him in prison. And if you want to protect the honor of the prophet you can say that John sent his disciples to Jesus with their question because he wanted them to see it. But he’s in the pit. John has had Jeremiah’s message – it’s coming, and you all deserve it. He proclaimed Jesus the messiah. Here is the greater one whose sandals I’m not worthy to untie. He must become greater and I less. And John has become less, but has Jesus become greater? For me, I tend to take John’s question from his disciples straight.

“Are you the one who is to come? Or shall we look for another?”

Why have you left me sitting in the pit? Why is this Kingdom that is drawing near, looking so weak? To me it’s a cry of Jeremiah, “You fooled me (Jeremiah 20:7).” Explain yourself. You made me a laughingstock. And you do nothing.

**Christology**

And this is where Jesus reveals more of himself. Jesus tells those disciples of John two things. The first thing he tells them is go back and report to John what you have seen and heard.

When the Kingdom of Heaven draws near what happens?

The blind receive their sight. Those who walk in darkness see the light.

The lame walk. Those whose legs have failed, become strong again.

The lepers are cleansed. The creeping uncleanness that eats away at us. The steals the ability to feel. Is washed away.

The deaf hear. Ears that were closed to the word will journey days to hear it. And will marvel at the authority of what they hear.

The dead are raised. The plants that have withered. The people that have given up. Life has come again.

And yes, all the physical miracles are happening. “In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits.” These are the signs and wonders of the messiah. By all signs of wonders point at the deeper truth. And that deeper truth is that “the good news is preached to the poor.” Who is the King of the Kingdom of Heaven? How shall we know him? His reign is good news…good news for the poor.

His reign is good news for poor sinners. And it is only for sinners. If you think you can see on your own, you don’t need Jesus. If you think you can walk it yourself, you don’t need Jesus. If you think you are clean enough, you don’t need Jesus. If you think you have life in you, you don’t need Jesus. This Jesus is good news for the poor. For those who need him. This Jesus and his Kingdom draws near to those in want.

And the second thing Jesus tells them to say to John: “blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

The Kingdom and the King comes humbly…but it comes in the way the King desires. The blessings of God are offered in the person of Jesus. And there is no other way. This is not a negotiation. The Kingdom comes on his timeline. It comes where and when He wills. It doesn’t in this age come by power and glory. It comes by grace. It comes by promise believed.

Even when down in the pit. Even when you think you’ve been fooled. “I will save the lame, and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.” The root needs to go down deep into that. We need to know that this is a God that keeps his promises. And if it seems long in coming, wait for it. Persevere. Because perseverance builds character, and character hope, and hope will not disappoint.

**Moral**

The old testament has a few passages where God can seem a little testy. My go to is always Job. “Who is this who darkens my counsel with words without understanding?” But there are others. After the Baptist’s disciples go back, is one of those New Testament times. Jesus turns to the crowds. To the people who have immediately been the beneficiaries of the Drawing near of the Kingdom.

And if this crowd is like any of the others, they love the miracles. They always want more of them. But the are also quick to judge the Kingdom. They are offended at what the signs point to. They are offended at the humble king. The are offended that he desires faith and that he doesn’t deliver the glory now.

And Jesus turns to them and asks “what did they come out to the desert to see?” He asks it three times. And provides a couple of wrong answers. A reed shaken by the wind. Did you want a capricious God? One that every time the wind blows would bend a different direction? Did you want a vending machine God? Put in the cosmic quarter and get out whatever junk food you desired? Did you come to the wilderness for that God who would tell you anything you want to hear?

A man dressed in soft clothing? Did you go out to the wilderness to see the influence peddler? Did you enter the desert to find the King of this world?

You know those kind of people and places well enough. You know that none of those have what you are after. Oh the sweet words may feel good for a bit. You might fool yourself for a time that all the President’s men are wise counsel. And you know where to find them. It ain’t the desert.

You came out to the desert, because this is the one place the world doesn’t want. Fine. God will start here. You don’t come to a church to get along better in the world. You shouldn’t come to a church to here someone tell you all your dreams are within your grasp. You come here is hear the WORD. You come here to be reminded of who God is. And what he has done.

You come here to prepare. You come here to develop that deep root that draws on the deep waters. The living waters. You come here for Jesus and him alone.

**Eschatological**

And Jesus has revealed himself to us. We need not just fear the righteous kingdom, but we can love it. Because Jesus has made God known. Jesus has revealed the depths of the steadfast love of God.

It is a love that comes to sinners. It is a love that comes to the desperate willing to go out to the desert. It is a love that tells us the truth. It is a love that promises.

“Fear not, O Zion, let nor your hand grow weak. The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save.”

He’s a God who keeps his promises.

Look at the works of the people of God. The good news is preached to the poor. And not an age goes without a witness. And the least in the Kingdom is greater than the greatest of the world. Believe Him.