

Luke 7:18-35

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The gospel of Luke is written with a Gentile or Greek-speaking cultured people in mind. In writing the gospel account Luke focuses upon the role and importance of women and the poor, more than the other three gospels, and relates the most parable teachings of Jesus in his story of who Jesus is, how he was and is in the world, and how that changes even us.

Are you the one who is to come: This phrase points to the doubt of John, struggling to see how the Jesus he sees and hears of corresponds to the Messiah he anticipated, expects and is preparing for. He's looking for certainty in his trust and confidence. It's similar to that for which Luke writes his gospel to Theophilus (as we hear in the prologue)

"¹Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, ²just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed." Luke 1:1-4

It's also similar to the doubt of Thomas after the resurrection, unable to interpret what he's heard with what he expected.

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. *Do not doubt but believe.*" ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." John 20:24-29

Verse 22: Jesus reviews and summarizes the increasingly amazing things he's been doing using a loose quotation of messianic scriptures, pointing to John that his example and work conforms to that written and prophesied about the Messiah. Isaiah 28:18-21; 35:5-6 and 61:1

¹⁸ On that day the deaf shall hear the words of a scroll, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.

¹⁹ The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord, and the neediest people shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.

²⁰ For the tyrant shall be no more, and the scoffer shall cease to be; all those alert to do evil shall be cut off—

²¹ those who cause a person to lose a lawsuit, who set a trap for the arbiter in the gate, and without grounds deny justice to the one in the right.

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

¹ The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;

7 ¹⁸ The disciples of John reported all these things to him. So John summoned two of his disciples ¹⁹ and sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" ²⁰ When the men had come to [Jesus], they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, '*Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?*'" ²¹ Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind. ²² And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them. ²³ And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

²⁴ When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? ²⁵ What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who put on fine clothing and live in luxury are in royal palaces. ²⁶ What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ²⁷ This is the one about whom it is written,

'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

²⁸ I tell you, among those born of women no one is greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." ²⁹ (And all the people who heard this, including the tax collectors, acknowledged the justice of God, because they had been baptized with John's baptism. ³⁰ But by refusing to be baptized by him, the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves.)

³¹ "To what then will 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 wailed, 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

The biblical quote in v. 27 combines echoes of two prophetic scriptures in the Hebrew Scriptures and descriptions in Mark 1:2 and Matthew 11:10.

²⁰ I [YHWH] am going to send an angel in front of you [Israel], to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. ²¹ Be attentive to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him.

²² But if you listen attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes.

- Exodus 20:20-22 (*Warning and promise to the Israelites looking towards the Promised Land in Canaan*).

¹See, I [YHWH] am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. 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; ³ he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness.

Malachi 3:1-3

We played the flute for you, ... we wailed, and you did not:

Jesus compares the way that those who rejected John (the Pharisees and experts in the Law (lawyers) to a common scene in the marketplace of children refusing to play a fun or sorrowful game. The leaders rejected both the strict asceticism of John and the free association of Jesus with all people.

the Son of Man has come eating and drinking: Jesus is referring back to the way in which he was judged by his association with Levi (and other tax collectors) related in Luke 5:29-32

²⁹ Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. ³⁰ The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" ³¹ Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; ³² I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Wisdom: in the book of Proverbs wisdom is personified as a force of God, a name for the divine essence (often evoked in the Greek translation of the word "wisdom" as Sophia).

²¹ Wisdom cries out in the street;
in the squares she raises her voice.

²¹ At the busiest corner 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?"

²³ Give heed to my reproof;
I will pour out my thoughts to you;

I will make my words known to you. – Proverbs 1:20-23 [33]

Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' ³⁵ Nevertheless, **wisdom** is vindicated by all her children."

Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

***What strikes you in this passage ? How does it interact with what you're living these days, or thinking about?**

***Jesus speaks to us directly, by speaking within the text to the doubt of John the Baptizer. He's unsure if Jesus is the one he thought Jesus to be. Something in what John hears and sees about Jesus doesn't seem to correspond to his expectations, or confirm his hopes. Jesus responds both with his example as well as referring back to scripture (especially in Isaiah) to clarify his vocation. Doubt means much more than just disbelief. It's a feeling of uncertainty, lack of conviction, questioning of the truth or the veracity of a fact. It implies both in Greek and English the idea of wavering and hesitation. We tend to think of it as the absence of trust, but it's also a "crossroads" moment in which we need for something to choose the direction in which to proceed. How are you hesitating these days in this sense of doubt? What is keeping you from continuing in the Way of Jesus, knowing how to live faithfully, love actively and trust Jesus relationally?**

***Jesus talks about the rejection of the religious leaders. Both John (who was extreme in a rigid way) and Jesus (who is extreme in an inclusive way) are too much for them. Neither corresponds to whatever expectations, or mental image that they had constructed of prophets and the Messiah. We live in a season of great disruption and disorientation, in which we are invited either to double-down in our rigidity and historical certitude; or to embrace an accelerating newness and openness. How do you decide what God wants for you?; for us? How do you listen for God's wisdom alive and active in our world? What are you hearing in this season about who we are called to love in Christ's name?; how we are called to love; and maybe the stand(s) we need to take to bring Christ's good news to our world? Spend some time talk to God seeking clarity about God's continued calling of us, and how you may need to be healed and released from your expectations, fears or doubts.**