

# God's Visitation

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him.

When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue.

And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.

Therefore, I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me.

And I say to one, go, and he goes. And to another, come, and he comes. And to my servant, do this, and he does it. When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him.

[ 1 : 1 7 ]     And turning to the crowd that followed him, said, I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

Soon afterward, he went to a town called Nain. And his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother.

And she was a widow. And a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, do not weep.

Then he came up and touched the bier. And the bier stood still. And he said, young man, arise.

And the dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, a great prophet has risen among us.

[ 2 : 2 6 ]     And God has visited his people. And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country. The disciples of John reported all these things to him.

And John, 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? 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?

In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits. And on many who were blind he bestowed sight. 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.

And blessed is the one who is not offended by me. 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?

[ 3 : 32 ] A reed shaken by the wind? 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 king's courts.

What then did you go out to see? A prophet? A prophet? Yes. I tell you. And more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way before you.

I tell you, among those born of woman, none is greater than John. Yet, the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.

To what then shall I compare the people of this generation? And what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another.

[ 4 : 44 ] 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, look at him, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Yet wisdom is justified by all her children.

This is the word of the Lord. Jesus just preached his most famous sermon in chapter 6, which included the difficult teaching that we should love even our enemies.

And he then told everyone that instead of following the hypocritical religious leaders, that they should follow him and obey him. And that begs the question, and we are supposed to be asking this question as we're following the progress of the gospel.

Who are you to say these things? Why should we follow you? What makes you so special? In chapter 7, Luke recounts the events from Jesus' life that demonstrate to us that Jesus is Christ, the Lord, who is worthy of our trust and loyalty.

[ 5 : 55 ] That's the main point of this passage. And in turn, he demonstrates to us the Lord's authority, the Lord's compassion, and the Lord's identity. So let's begin first by looking at verses 1 to 10 and what it teaches us about the Lord's authority.

It says in verses 1 to 2, After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him.

A centurion is a Roman military commander in charge of 100 soldiers. This might not sound like a lot of people, especially some of you with a military background.

But the way the Roman army was structured, a centurion would be the modern equivalent of maybe a colonel or a major. So it's a pretty significant appointment in terms of their influence within the Roman army.

So he's a high-ranking officer. Also, the fact that he is a centurion in the Roman army tells us that he is most likely a Gentile, not a Jew. And this is confirmed by the rest of the passage.

[ 6 : 59 ] And having heard of Jesus and his power to work miracles, verse 3 tells us that the centurion sent to him elders of the Jews asking him to come and heal his servant. The elders of the Jews is a reference to the leaders of the Jewish synagogue.

And those people also exercised kind of civil authority within the Jewish community. So the centurion, being a Gentile, perhaps feels, since Jesus is a Jewish teacher, that he would have a better chance of getting his servant healed if he sent this delegation of the elders.

But exactly how he has such a connection to the elders of the Jews is not clear until verses 4 to 5. It says that when the elders came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, He is worthy to have you do this for him.

For he loves our nation. And he's the one who built us, our synagogue. So these elders are not functioning as the centurion's messengers reluctantly.

As we can see here, they plead with Jesus earnestly. They're actually personally invested in the success of this mission. They care about this centurion. They believe that the centurion is worthy to have received this favor from Jesus because he loves the nation, the nation of the Jews.

[ 8 : 11 ] And he is the one who built them the synagogue that they worship in. So that's the two reasons. Those are the two reasons that these elders give for why they believe that the centurion is worthy. He's kind of like an ambassador who is stationed in a foreign country, but comes to love and respect the culture that he's in.

And so he does things for that community. He invests in that community. So this is kind of what the centurion is. We're not sure that he does. The passage doesn't tell us that he's a convert. It doesn't go that far, but he's definitely favorable toward the Jews.

He loves the Jewish people. And as a result, he was generous with them and built them a synagogue. That last detail suggests that this is quite a well-to-do man. And a normal soldier made 75 denarii per year.

A denarius is a day's wage for a common laborer in this time. So 75 for a normal soldier, which is not a lot. But a centurion made close to 4 to 8,000 denarii a year.

So while he might not be a millionaire by our standards, he has a very comfortable six-figure income. And he was able to afford to do this in support of the Jewish people. And verse 6 tells us that Jesus listened to their earnest plea and was journeying toward the centurion when something surprising happens.

[ 9 : 29 ] It says in verse 6, When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends saying to him, Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.

Therefore, I did not presume to come to you, but say the word and let my servant be healed. So we don't know exactly what prompted the centurion here to change his initial request.

Because his initial request, please come and heal my servant. But it seems that after having heard that Jesus was on his way, as he was imagining Jesus coming into his home, he felt a keen sense of unworthiness.

And decided to send some of his friends to relay a new message. And the message is, Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Notice that this message is in the first person, unlike the Jewish elders' request, which was in the third person.

So these friends are relaying the centurion's very words. The centurion himself is saying these words, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. So there's a stark contrast here between what the elders say about the centurion, and then what the centurion himself says about himself.

[ 10 : 41 ] Because they think that he is worthy to receive Jesus' personal visit, but the centurion himself believes that he is not worthy of such a visit. In fact, he doesn't even deem himself worthy to come to Jesus.

So it's not that he considered it beneath him to make the journey himself. Rather, he felt unworthy to come visit Jesus personally. It reminds us of the response that Peter had when he first saw Jesus as he really is.

In Luke 5, 8, Peter fell down at Jesus' knees saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. Once again, Luke tells us over and over again, this is the proper posture of anyone who would approach Jesus, the Son of God.

But why does this centurion, who is a seemingly worthy man, feel so unworthy before the presence of Jesus? Look again at how he addresses Jesus in verse 6.

Just as Peter addressed Jesus as Lord before confessing his unworthiness, the centurion likewise calls Jesus Lord. This could be a generic word, but in Luke, it is used specifically to refer to divine agents in important places like this.

[ 12 : 05 ] In Luke 1, 43, God was called Lord. And in Luke 2, 11, Jesus was described as a Savior who is Christ the Lord. So as Luke's readers, we're supposed to be aware and to discern this deeper meaning when we see Jesus addressed as Lord.

Because even though the centurion might not grasp the full implication of what he is saying, we have the background to know that Jesus is truly the Son of God. The centurion knows that Jesus is at the very least God's messenger, empowered with the power of God, and he feels unworthy to approach Him.

And even though the Jewish leaders in his community deemed him worthy, even though he is worthy by every human metric, because he is a high-ranking officer in the Roman army, because he is a recognized leader in the community, because he is wealthy, and because he is generous, and he is a humanitarian, the centurion, in spite of all of this, knows that he is not worthy to approach Jesus because of the supreme worthiness of God and His messenger.

Why does that matter to us? It doesn't matter whether you're a professor or a president.

It doesn't matter whether you're a genius or a billionaire. It doesn't matter that you're a celebrity. It doesn't matter that you're the pinnacle of human moral achievement.

[ 13 : 38 ] It doesn't matter how much money you have given to good causes. You are not worthy to approach God. No one is.

Because He is God, He made you. He owns you. Everything you have is from Him. All that is good in our world is of Him.

He is perfect in His holiness. And for this reason, humility and awareness of our unworthiness is the one proper posture we can have when we approach God.

Do you recognize your unworthiness before God this morning? This is what makes Jesus' response amazing. Verse 6 tells us that Jesus went with them.

Jesus was on His way to the centurion in spite of His unworthiness. The fact that the centurion was a Gentile did not keep Jesus from coming to Him.

[ 14 : 45 ] It's only when you rightly recognize your own unworthiness that you can rightly appreciate God's gracious visitation. That though we're unworthy that God is here. That though we're unworthy God has sent His Spirit to indwell us.

That though we're unworthy God sent His Son to save us. It's only when you recognize that that we can rightly worship God and come to know Him. But note that the centurion is not giving up on the healing of his servant.

He adds at the end of verse 7, But say the word and let my servant be healed. He still wants Jesus to heal his servant but he doesn't want Jesus to take the trouble of coming to his house.

Instead, he asks Jesus simply to say the word. This reveals a profound faith because the pattern that we see in the Gospels and the pattern we've seen throughout the Gospel look up to this point is that people bring the sick to Jesus to receive healing.

And usually, Jesus lays hands on them to heal them. But here, the centurion believes that Jesus does not even need to be physically present with the sick in order to heal them.

[ 15 : 53 ] He believes that all Jesus needs to do is say the word in order to heal his servant. How did he arrive at such profound faith? He gives his reasoning in verse 8.

For I too am a man set under authority with soldiers under me and I say to one go and he goes and to another come and he comes and to my servant do this and he does it.

A soldier of a well-disciplined army knows what authority looks like. Sometimes, I feel like as a parent who has defied my kids on a regular basis, I don't quite appreciate the authority of God.

When God says something, it happens. When God commands, it's obeyed. And because the centurion has experienced this from having been, having used this delegated authority from the Roman government, because he has this authority that he has received from the Roman government, he knows that when he commands his soldiers, they obeyed him.

And because of this, he believes because Jesus as the messenger of God, as a divine representative, has God's authority on him, that when he speaks, that all he needs to do is speak and this will happen for him, that his servant will be healed.

[ 17 : 25 ] After hearing the centurion's response, Jesus says in verse 9, he marveled at him. This is the one instance in all four of the Gospels where Jesus is set to marvel at someone's faith.

In fact, Jesus is so impressed by his exemplary faith that he uses this opportunity to instruct the crowd. It says in verse 9, Jesus turned to the crowd that followed him and said, I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.

This Gentile's faith exceeded the faith of everyone in the nation of Israel. And his faith was validated in verse 10 when it says that when those who had been sent returned to his house, to the house, they found the servant well.

perhaps because Jesus' usual practice up to this point was to lay hands on people to heal them, people began to think that perhaps that's the only way Jesus could heal.

But Jesus' power, as this account is intended to show, was not limited by physical nearness and touch. What are some ways that we have put limitations on God's power, as these people have?

[ 18 : 44 ] What are some ways we have circumscribed God's authority? God can heal me of my cold, sure, but he can't cure me of my cancer.

God can forgive me of my sins, sure, but he can't give me victory over my sins. God is sovereign, sure, but he can't help our country with this president or these Supreme Court justices in power.

God can save my soul, sure, but he can't free me from my bodily addictions. God can give me a different job, sure, but he can't help me be grateful and successful and joyful in my current job.

Why not? There may be valid reasons for thinking that God won't do some of these things, but we should make sure that we're not rationalizing our own lack of faith.

If we truly recognize the extent of the Lord's authority, how would it change our lives? Wouldn't it make us more prayerful? Wouldn't it lead us to make bolder requests of God?

[ 20 : 07 ] Having given us a picture of Jesus' authority, Luke now turns to give us an example of the Lord's compassion. Verses 11 to 12 set the scene.

Read with me. Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her.

This is a tragic scene, and Luke builds up the sadness and the suspense of it all progressively by giving us more details one clause at a time.

He says, first, we are simply told that a man who had died was being carried out. This is a funeral procession. Of course, the funeral is sad in and of itself, but people die every day, right?

So it's not an unusual occurrence, at least, here. According to the Jewish burial custom, the corpse was generally not kept overnight, so this is probably a fresh death. This happened probably on the same day, and they're carrying the corpse, wrapped in cloth.

[ 21 : 19 ] They didn't use coffins back then, they used a wooden plank, so they put him on, and they're carrying him. Everyone can see the dead man as they're carrying him around. But that's not the only thing.

The funeral is bad in and of itself, sad in and of itself, but then Luke tells us further that this man was the only son of his mother. Now this is even more sad because this man was the only heir of his mother.

It's a tragedy enough for a mother to have to bury her own child. It's a premature death, but this woman will now be cut off from all the future generations. She has no one left to continue her family line.

No one left to take care of her when she is old and unable to care for herself. And as if that weren't tragic enough, Luke adds another detail that this mourning woman was also a widow.

This would have been indicated by the type of clothing she wore or by the fact that her husband was not with her as she was mourning the death of her son. That means this woman not only has lost her son, who can take care of her when she's older, she doesn't have anyone to take care of her now.

[ 22 : 30 ] She has no family left. In this day and age, in that culture, she would have no means of survival apart from the goodwill of her friends and neighbors.

It's such a sad sight. A considerable crowd from the town was with her. This is a common practice for the townspeople to join in mourning a death. And it says in verse 13, that when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, do not weep.

Once again, Jesus is called Lord. And Luke notes that Jesus had compassion on her. This is not merely an opportunity for Jesus to demonstrate his power, although it is that.

But it's not merely that. Jesus has compassion on this widow. He cares for her and wants to help her. So he comforts her and tells her not to cry.

Sometimes I think as Christians, we imagine that we're like these pawns on this great chess game that God is controlling. We imagine that God is this heartless mastermind who gives us suffering in order to further his purposes, who is a calculated, makes a cold, calculated move to sacrifice his pawns in order to advance his kingdom.

[ 23 : 55 ] them. Yes, God is sovereign. Yes, God is in control. And yes, God allows suffering sometimes to sanctify us. But God also cares for you. He knows your pain.

He has compassion on you. The sovereign Lord of the universe sees you. The usual pattern of Jesus' healing ministry is that people ask him for healing.

Not the other way around. But interestingly, in this passage, Jesus is the one who initiates contact with this widow. This woman is too consumed by her grief and mourning for her son to take any notice of Jesus.

But Jesus sees her and has compassion on her and comforts her. Some of you know what it's like to feel such grief.

Some of you know what it's like to feel so depressed, so crushed by a sense of guilt, or so anxious and fearful that you feel paralyzed. You know you should be crying out to the Lord for help, but you should be reminding yourself of God's truth and His faithfulness.

[ 25 : 20 ] You should be holding on to God's promises, but in those hard, dark moments, you just don't have the wherewithal to take those steps toward God. God's love, but know this, that even in those moments when you feel alone and abandoned in your struggle, the Lord sees you and has compassion on you.

God's love, is God's love. If you are a Christian, you have God's love. Ephesians 2, 4 to 5 tells us, God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved.

God didn't save us when we were sick with our sins and desperately seeking His help. He saved us when we were dead in our sins, when we were doing nothing to help our cause.

When we were a hopeless case, God in His great love saved us through Jesus Christ. That's the compassion of the Lord. And this compassion is what moves Jesus to do something shocking in verse 14.

It says, Then He came up and touched the bear, and the bearer stood still, and He said, Young men, I say to you, arise.

[ 26 : 53 ] It was a blatant breach of Jewish custom to interrupt the funeral. I mean, I guess that's kind of a blatant breach of any custom anywhere, right? Every culture, right?

And remember that Jesus was also a visitor from out of town, so here's this stranger. He hasn't quite even entered through the gates of the city yet, and He comes and He sees a funeral procession, and He has the audacity to interrupt the funeral.

He touched. According to Numbers 19, 11-22, any Jew that comes into contact with the dead contracted ritual uncleanness.

But Jesus is unfazed. He brings the funeral procession to a halt by touching. All of this is so brazen that the bearers were taking it.

Just stand still. They're probably dazed, and they're staring at Jesus in disbelief, and then Jesus does something that's even crazier. He commands the corpse as if he were a living human being.

[ 27 : 56 ] Young man, what? Can you see this? Young man, I say to you, arise. This is the point where all the sensible friends of the widow would have taken Jesus for a lunatic, and escorted him out.

But of course, that doesn't happen. Because Jesus is the son of God, and has authority over death. And verse 15 tells us that the dead man set up and began to speak.

And Jesus gave him to his mother. Instead of saying that the young man set up and began to speak, to emphasize the point, Luke says, the dead man, he's like a junk, the dead man set up and began to speak.

This man that was dead a minute ago, this man that couldn't move a finger a minute ago, is now sitting up and having a conversation. Instead of being polluted by the death that this man had on him, Jesus imparts new life to this man.

Instead of becoming unclean, Jesus makes clean the dead man he touches. But the focal point of this miracle is not the resuscitated dead man, but his mother, on whom Jesus had compassion.

[ 29 : 16 ] That's why he healed. So it says, Jesus gave him to his mother. The crowd's reaction is predictable.

It says in verse 16 to 17, fear seized them all, a common response, when you see someone that was dead to start walking again. And then they glorified God, saying, a great prophet has arisen among us, and God has visited his people.

And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country. The crowd is awestruck with fear of God, and they worship him, acclaiming Jesus as a great prophet through whom God has visited his people.

And the phrase great prophet is included here intentionally by Luke to bring to mind the Old Testament prophets like Elijah and Elisha, who also raised the dead.

In fact, there's an intentional echo in this passage in Luke of the 1 Kings 17, 17 to 24, where Elijah raises a widow's dead son to life.

[ 30 : 18 ] In both cases, the dead son of a widow is resuscitated, and in both cases, afterward, it is said that Jesus and Elijah respectively gave him to his mother.

Exact same phrase. Luke is making an intentional literary allusion to the account of Elijah's raising of the dead widow's son. But these parallels are there not just to highlight the similarities, but actually to highlight the differences, to contrast the two accounts.

Because in 1 Kings 17, Elijah has to pray earnestly, and then he stretches himself upon the child three times in order to revive the boy and, then he must pray some more, and then he finally comes back to life.

But all Jesus does here is say a simple command to the dead man. Once again, continuing that theme of what the centurion said, it's effortless for Jesus.

This highlights once again the unparalleled authority of Jesus, and raises the question again, what's his identity?

[ 31 : 23 ] Is Jesus really just a great prophet like Elijah and Elisha? Is the crowd correct in their assessment? That's what brings us to that final passage, 18 to 35.

We've seen the Lord's authority, the Lord's compassion, and now we get a passage that clearly states the Lord's identity by comparing him to the greatest prophet that ever lived up to that point. The account of Jesus performing these miracles was reported to John, and it says in verses 19 to 20 that John, 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 relay this to Jesus, and John, remember what John said about Jesus earlier. It's not that he doesn't have faith. John said about Jesus in Luke 3, 16 to 17, I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.

John baptized this Jesus that he prophesied about, and John came to the understanding that Jesus was the promised one, the Messiah who had baptized people with the Holy Spirit.

[ 32 : 50 ] But since then, it seems that some doubt has crept into John the Baptist's mind, and he wants to confirm that Jesus indeed is the one who is to come.

This leads us to ask an interesting question that we can't get a definite answer to, but there are contextual clues in the Gospel of Luke. Why exactly did John start to doubt? First, we already know from Luke chapter 3, 19 to 20, that John is currently locked up in prison by Herod Antipas.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus said in Luke 4, 18 to 19, quoting from Isaiah 61, that his mission is to proclaim good news to the poor and proclaim liberty to the captives, among other things.

And yet here's John still imprisoned by wicked Herod, and unable to witness any of the great mighty works of God that Jesus is doing.

Can you imagine? He waited his entire life for this. We could also tell from what John said about Jesus that he expected Jesus to bring about not just a spiritual renewal in a kingdom, but something that comes with political power as well.

[ 34 : 13 ] That he expected the evil regimes that ruled during his days to be toppled. He expected justice to be meted out on earth with the coming of Jesus, not recognizing the gap between Jesus' first coming when he comes to save, not to condemn, and his second coming when he comes to meet our final judgment.

And this kind of didn't match up, right? His expectations of the Messiah and what Jesus did, and that sowed confusion and doubt among some people, and it seems including with John the Baptist as well.

This is encouraging for us because not only does John the Baptist, Jesus calls him the greatest prophet, as we'll see in the next few verses. He had doubts. This also builds our faith in this account of Jesus, because if you're a follower of Jesus, why would you include this embarrassing account in this story?

You're telling me the greatest prophet that ever lived had doubts about Jesus being the Messiah? Why would you put that in there? I wouldn't if I were making this up. But it's in here to comfort us.

In here to assure us. Because maybe you have come to believe in Jesus, but becoming a Christian has not been what you expected it to be. You're encountering difficulties and sufferings that you did not anticipate.

[ 35 : 49 ] Maybe overcoming sin hasn't been the smooth sailing that you expected it to be. Luke includes this exchange between John the Baptist and Jesus here to assure us it's okay.

And here's the assurance. Verse 21 to 23, Jesus gives his response. In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits.

And on many who were blind he bestowed sight. 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. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me. During their visit, John's disciples witness all these things that Jesus does.

And with that as the backdrop, Jesus tells them to report to John all the things that they have seen Jesus do. And this list is selective. It's not exhaustive. But it is representative of the functions of the Messiah.

[ 36 : 53 ] It's taken from Isaiah. The prophecies of Isaiah. And there's an emphasis on blind receiving sight. That's the only element that's repeated twice in this passage. The verse he bestowed sight in verse 21 literally means to grace someone with sight.

It points to the grace of God in giving us the gift of salvation rather than making us earn it. And then the last two clauses recall the Beatitudes of chapter 6 verses 22 to 23.

The poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me. What did Jesus say earlier? Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God.

The poor is a generalization as we've mentioned multiple times throughout the past few weeks. It's a generalization for the category of people who are humbled and ill-treated in this life on account of their commitment to Jesus.

So this is a direct exhortation to John the Baptist. How kind of Jesus to speak to him this way. And it's also a direct message and exhortation to anyone who suffers on account of his or her faith in Jesus.

[ 38 : 02 ] Blessed is the one who is not offended by me. The word offend is taken from Isaiah 8 14. It refers to stumbling over something, tripping over something.

If we put our faith in Jesus, he becomes our rock, the firm foundation upon which we can stand. But if you reject Jesus, he becomes the rock of stumbling and offense that trips us and leads to our judgment and downfall.

Jesus is exhorting John not to stumble on account of him. Some of you have also experienced embarrassment and ridicule on account of your faith in Jesus.

But Jesus gives you a comforting word. Blessed is the one who is not offended by me. So don't trip over Jesus.

Stand firm in your faith in him. That's the assurance. The assurance that Jesus gave to John, Luke records to assure us in our faith. And after John's disciples leave, Jesus turns to the crowd around him to provide them with an explanation of John the Baptist's person and ministry.

[ 39 : 15 ] He asks the crowd, what did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 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 king's courts. John the Baptist ministered in the wilderness.

So this whole section is about him. A reed shaken by the wind is a common metaphor for someone who is unreliable and unsteady. Kind of a someone with like what we might call a spineless pushover that is blown to and fro by the wind of opinion.

Wind of opinion. The implied answer to the first rhetorical question is no. The people did not go out into the wilderness to see this kind of person. John was a man of conviction and resolve.

In fact, he's now in prison for condemning the illegal, the relationship that Herod had, the incest really. And the people also did not go out to see a man dressed in soft clothing.

[ 40 : 22 ] Such people live in luxury and are in king's courts. John was not a self-indulgent man, a royal official softened by ears and ease and comfort in the king's courts.

Rather, these kind of prophets, so-called prophets that live in king's courts, they live to preserve the status quo by flattering the kings and telling them whatever they want to hear. Rather, John's not like that.

John was a disciplined and austere man who sought to please God alone. So what then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. Jesus elaborates in 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.

The scripture that Jesus cites here is a combination of two passages. Malachi 3.1 speaks of a messenger that will prepare the way for God so that God can come to his people.

And then it's also an allusion to Exodus 23.20, which speaks of a messenger that will prepare the way to bring God's people to God. So it's kind of a splice together.

[ 41 : 32 ] So John the Baptist fulfills both of these prophecies because he is the messenger that prepares the way for Jesus is coming and Jesus is God. So Jesus is not exactly being demurred here about his identity.

But not only that, John the Baptist also prepared God's people for God by calling them to repentance. This was John's special ministry.

And for this reason, Jesus says 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.

John is the greatest man that ever lived before Jesus. We love having these conversations, right? I feel like everywhere you go online, there's a list for everything.

The greatest list, greatest this, greatest that, the greatest athlete, greatest this. And we're always wondering who the greatest are. Here, Jesus tells us, you're looking for who the greatest human being that ever lived before Jesus?

[ 42 : 37 ] It was John. Why? Because he fulfilled the unique prophetic role of preparing the way for God and preparing a people for God immediately before the coming of the Son of God.

John was more than a prophet for God. He was in fact the greatest man. But because Jesus ushers in the kingdom of God in an unprecedented way by defeating sin and death, by dying on the cross for the sins of his people and being raised from the dead so that because after he ascends to the right hand of the Father and raised, he sends his Holy Spirit down to indwell his people so that as we now live as God's people, as we walk around as Christians, God's presence is with us.

He walks with us. He speaks through us. He ministers among us. Because of that unprecedented reality, Jesus says, the least in the kingdom of God is greater than John.

That's mind-boggling, isn't it? Is it how you see yourself if you're a Christian? If you compare yourself side by side with John?

John? Taylor? Greater? John?

[ 44 : 17 ] Ashley? Greater? Do you realize the staggering truth?

That means if you're a follower of Christ today, the privileges that you enjoy, the grace of God that's at work in you, the spirit of God who empowers you, the salvation that you have experienced is far greater in measure than anything, anything that great John the Baptist experienced than anyone before him.

How can we take this great salvation for granted? How can we not tell people about this great salvation? How can we not live every moment of our lives joyful, praising God?

John was the last figure to live in the age of promise. We live in the age of fulfillment. fulfillment. Do you know the joy and privilege of being in the kingdom of God?

Then, having given an assessment of John, Jesus turns to give an assessment of the generation to which he ministered. And so, here he brings out very sharp application points for us.

[ 45 : 53 ] He says, he compares them in verse 32, that they are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another. We play the flute for you and you did not dance.

We sang a dirge and you did not weep. This is probably a reference to an ancient children's game where they reenact weddings and funerals. So, we play a flute at a wedding, you sing a dirge at a funeral.

And when, I mean, they didn't have as many toys as we do now, right? When one group of children played the flute as in a wedding, the other group of children are supposed to dance, right?

When one group sings a dirge, the other group was supposed to act like they were crying or weeping and mourning. It's similar in concept to the games that children still play called Follow the Leader.

You guys have played that a little bit, right? Jesus compares the Pharisees and the Jewish teachers of the law who reject him to children playing games. And they're like spoiled brats who only want to play the game on their terms and never play along with others.

[ 47 : 02 ] They're always telling the other group of kids that they're not doing what they're supposed to do. The point that Jesus is making becomes clear when we recognize that verses 32 and 35 have a mirroring structure.

In verse 32a, the Pharisees are compared to children playing games. In verse 35, the followers of Christ are called children of wisdom. In verse 32b, it says, we played the flute for you and you did not dance.

That's referenced to a comparison to the son of man in verse 34 who would come eating and drinking. And you say, look at him, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Verse 32c talks about we sang a dirge and you did not weep.

That's a comparison to John the Baptist who came eating no bread and drinking no wine. And you say he has a demon. You guys see the point. John the Baptist followed an ascetic lifestyle, living in the wilderness, wearing a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist and eating locusts and wild honey.

Delicious. And the Pharisees and the Jewish scholars rejected him, saying he's too radical. He's unbalanced. He's demon possessed.

[ 48 : 15 ] You would think that they would have been more favorable toward Jesus then because Jesus came. He befriended sinners and tax collectors. He frequently feasted with them so that he can share with them the saving news that he brought.

But no, the Pharisees and scribes rejected Jesus as well. They called him a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. So Jesus is using a very pointed and appropriate comparison to make, drive home the point that these people who reject Jesus, who also rejected John the Baptist, do so.

They did so not because there was actually something deficient about John or about Jesus, but because of their prideful unbelief and stubborn selfishness.

Instead of listening to the messengers of God, they wanted to dictate the terms by which God must work. Instead of submitting to God, they wanted God to affirm and conform to their way of life.

So when John came weeping, they played the flute. When Jesus came rejoicing, they sang a dirge. What are some ways that we have done this? If you're not yet a follower of Christ, I want you to ask this question to yourself.

[ 49 : 39 ] Are you dictating the terms upon which God must come to you instead of approaching God on His terms? Do you keep changing the conditions you set before you would become a follower of Christ because you're not really earnest about becoming my follower of Christ, but you want to preserve your own lifestyle, your own pride?

If God did this and this for me, then I would follow Him maybe. If God proved Himself and demonstrated it this way in a way that's compelling to me. If God were like this, if He believed all the things that I believe, if He taught all the values that I value, then maybe I would become a follower of Christ.

That's not how this works. He's God. He's the creator and you're the creature.

He's the Lord. He's the King. We are the subjects. And we come to Him only when we come to Him appropriately is when we submit in humility. Believers are subject to this temptation as well, aren't we?

We can read the scripture. The word of God, as we call it. But we pick and choose what we like. Well, that's a little bit offensive.

[ 51 : 13 ] Well, let's never talk about that. That seems kind of backward, regressive. God has come.

And that's the main point here that John's trying to drive home for us. God Himself has come. To seek and save you.

Jesus is the King who leaves His throne room and rolls up His sleeves to get to work, to redeem you from your slavery to sin and death.

And is that how we respond to our King? Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 52 : 29 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.