

Blessed Is He Who Is Not Offended Because Of Me.

Text: Mat 11:2-10

Suggested Hymns:

6, 737, 14, 286, 345

- 1) Christ's kingdom is spiritual
- 2) Christ's Followers Are Often Not
The Wise And Mighty
- 3) Christ's Followers Are Far From Perfect
- 4) It Is Christ Who Knows What Is Best For Us,
And Not Ourselves
- 5) Christ Came To Preach The Gospel To The Poor

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 11:2-10, ² *And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples³ and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"* ⁴ *Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see:* ⁵ *"The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.* ⁶ ***"And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."***

⁷ *As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"* ⁸ *"But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.* ⁹ *"But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet.* ¹⁰ *"For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We have here a true Advent text. He who is to come is spoken of, the Messiah, whose coming had been prophesied in the writings of the Old Testament.

John the Baptist, in prison, hears of the wonderful works of Christ and sends two of his disciples to ask Jesus the question, *"Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"* We ask, Did John not know that Jesus was the Messiah,

or did he doubt? Did he need this information? It seems incredible that he sent two of his disciples to Jesus to receive information for himself. He knew through direct revelation from God at the baptism of Jesus that Jesus was the Messiah.

He must have sent this embassy on account of his disciples, who were in need of instruction. Jesus does not answer the question of John directly, but He answers it far better than if He had merely said yes. He answers by pointing to His works.

Judge for yourselves, He says, as it were. ⁵ *“The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.* After having replied to John’s question in this manner, Jesus says: *“Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”* This is a very significant statement. Let us try to grasp the meaning, and the importance, of it. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Blessed Are Those Who Are Not Offended Because Christ’s Kingdom Is Spiritual.

The meaning of the statement is plain: *“Blessed is the man who is not disappointed when he looks at Me and who will not in such disappointment reject Me.”* But why should anybody be disappointed in Jesus? Christ appeared to be a mere prophet, but not a great King, as the Scriptures had prophesied that the Messiah should be. He was poor, He wore no crown, He bore no sceptre, the circumstances of His life were humble.

How could He be the Promised One, being so lowly? Was there not, after all, some fatal error lurking somewhere in this matter? These questions were bound to arise in the minds of John’s disciples.

Similar questions arise in our minds today. Jesus is preached to us in the Scriptures as the great King, but does He show Himself as such? We have His Word, but He remains invisible. Our hearts fear and quake and tremble, doubts arise, but the King does not appear.

The unbelievers taunt and mock, and still the King does not show Himself. This situation is so distressing to many people that they feel offended and say, We refuse to believe in such an invisible being, who remains hidden. *“Blessed is he*

who is not offended because of Me.” Christ tells us that His kingdom is invisible, and spiritual.

2. Blessed Are Those Who Are Not Offended Because Christ’s Followers Are Often Not The Wise And Mighty

Probably the disciples of John expected to see Jesus at the head of an army, getting ready for a battle with the enemy. But what did they find? A small band of disciples, who did not at all present a formidable appearance. Was that His whole force ? What a weak Messiah!

Here is one of our greatest stumbling-blocks. Jesus has His followers, but who are they largely? Not the wise and mighty, not the powerful and wealthy, but chiefly the poorer classes, those who are not so prominent. We frequently observe that, when a man becomes mighty and wealthy, he falls away.

As always, the words of Paul are true today also, as we read in 1 Corinthians 1:26, ²⁶ *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.* Blessed is he who is not on this account offended in Jesus!

3. Blessed Are Those Who Are Not Offended Because Christ’s Followers Are Far From Perfect

If the disciples of John had an opportunity to watch the twelve apostles for any length of time, they found in them great imperfections: pride, love of self, and sinful ambition.

Is their Master, then, the Messiah? Here was another fruitful source of offence. What a sad story we have to tell here! We look upon those who profess to be followers of Jesus, and we find that so many fail to show the spirit of love and charity, of forbearance and fairness, of helpfulness and mercy toward the weak and the erring.

Far oftener we see pride and haughtiness, the display of evil passions and ambitions, and often these things manifest themselves under the cloak of religion and parade as something holy.

We notice strife and dissension among those who ought to love each other. Lest we be carried away by a wave of bitter judgment of others, let us take a

mirror and look at ourselves. We shall see that we are exhibiting the same qualities which we are criticising.

Oh, it is true that the many sins of Christians, their slowness in doing good works, their unwillingness to measure up in their lives to their great profession, are strong reasons why many people will not believe in Jesus.

How often do we hear it said that people will not join the Church because its members are so very different from what they ought to be! When we are in danger of being offended in Jesus on this account, let us remember that Jesus has foreseen these difficulties and that He stands before us and says: *“Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”* Remember, you are NOT believing in His followers, you are believing in Him.

4. Blessed Are Those Who Are Not Offended Because It Is Christ Who Knows What Is Best For Us, And Not Ourselves

The messengers of John could not help reflecting with pain and sorrow on the fact that their great teacher now had been languishing in prison for probably more than a year, and, behold, the man whom they are to consider as the Messiah does not order them to bring John the reassuring information that soon the dungeon walls would be broken down and he would be set free.

No promise of that kind is given to them to carry back to their master. Here there was a circumstance that mystified and probably offended them. And what must have been their thoughts when John finally had to bow down in prison and was beheaded? They certainly stood in need of that admonition: *“Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”*

We, too, have many tribulations, and much evil is harassing us. We anxiously look for light and help, but it seems to be very slow in coming. Many a Christian languishes on a sick-bed that has held him for weeks and months. His prayers apparently are not answered.

Another one has a disobedient son or daughter. His supplications, it seems, are without avail. If Jesus is the Messiah, the great God, why does He not help? But Jesus says: *“Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”* His ways are not our ways. He knows what is best for us.

5. Blessed Are Those Who Are Not Offended Because Christ Came To Preach The Gospel To The Poor.

Among the things that Jesus tells the disciples of John to observe was the preaching of the Gospel to the poor. We know what Jesus preached. He spoke to the multitudes of sin and grace; having described the sternness of God's Law, Jesus pictured to them the love of the heavenly Father, who is not willing that anybody should be lost and who was sending the Redeemer to bear the sins of men.

It was a glorious message, and there were many poor sinners who received it with joy. Oh, how important the warning to John's disciples not to become offended at it! However, it is just this message of Christ which does not appeal to the proud heart of man. Blinded by sinful pride, natural man will not admit that he needs a Redeemer who will pay for his sins and shortcomings.

Witness the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees. We need that warning addressed to the disciples of John today. The message of Jesus can briefly be described as the Gospel for the poor. According to the promptings of our unconverted heart we wish to reach heaven through our own powers.

Friends, when our Old Adam rises in protest against the Gospel truth of salvation through faith in Christ, not through works of our own, then let the words of Jesus resound in our minds: ***“Blessed is who that is not offended because of Me.”***

Again, from another point of view, it must have seemed offensive to the disciples of John that the Gospel was preached to the poor. Jesus was ***“receiving tax-collectors and sinners,”*** the Pharisees murmured. Jesus was not fasting, as the disciples of John did. It may be that the objection arose in them that Jesus was encouraging lawlessness, transgression of the holy Law of God, a free and easy attitude toward sin.

Looking around them, they may have seen in the company of Jesus many who formerly had been notorious for disobeying the commandments of God. Was He not encouraging sin? Such thoughts, if they held them, were, of course, altogether unjustified; for wherever the Gospel does really enter the heart, it creates a new being, changing the person thoroughly and making him a child of God, whom he will now serve in true gratitude and love.

But there is no denying that they, being stringent in their mode of life, needed this warning. The charge is heard today that the very Gospel-message harms the cause of true morality and encourages sinners to continue on their wicked path. If our proud heart should ever join in such criticism, then let us hear the Word of Jesus: ***“Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”***

On the other hand, the disciples of John may have heard that Jesus, just a short time before, namely, in the Sermon on the Mount, had said, : ***unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.***¹ This might have seemed very severe to them and proved a rock of offence.

Is not this one of the chief objections against the confessional Lutheran Churches today, that it is so strict, that it opposes membership in sinful societies, that it will not permit participation in sinful amusements, that it refuses to ignore any part of God’s Moral Law ?

This is the position of Jesus. He is a Friend of sinners, but not of sin. Jesus solemnly says, ¹⁸ ***“For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”***

If we feel in ourselves the urge to leave Jesus because He will not permit us to follow our carnal desires, if His Word becomes distasteful to us because it does not grant a license to serve the flesh, then let us remember that He said, ***“Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”***

Finally, in the Gospel of Jesus there are many things which the human intellect cannot understand or grasp. If the disciples of John listened for a little while, they heard such things. Many people left Jesus because they felt offended at His doctrine, inasmuch as it surpassed their powers of comprehension.

Can we deny it that here we have one of the great sources of enmity against Jesus and His teaching? He refers to things that are beyond our human understanding and knowledge, and hence His message is not acceptable to our carnal reason.

Think of the doctrine of the Trinity, of Baptism, of the Lord’s Supper, of the two natures in Christ, etc. When doubts arise in our minds on this score, then let us listen to Jesus, saying: ***“Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”***

The day will come when we shall bless our Saviour for warning us so gently not to be offended in Him. When we no longer walk merely by faith, but by sight, then we shall see that, in spite of appearances to the contrary here on earth, He is really our Lord, Saviour, and King and that His Gospel is everlastingly true.

May He grant us His Holy Spirit to the end that we shall never be offended in Him! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 5:20