

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 7: 18-23

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read Luke Chapter 7 and today we will read verses 18 to 23. Earlier we read that after Jesus raised the son of a widow in the city of Nain from the dead.

Verse 17: "And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region."

At this time, Jesus' earthly ministry—healing the sick, casting out demons, and preaching the gospel—was in full course. Wherever He went, many people followed Him.

Verse 18: "Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things."

At this time, John had been imprisoned for more than half a year. About a year and a half earlier, he had baptized Jesus in the Jordan River and declared, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" After that, John continued his ministry for nearly another year. During that same period, Jesus began His ministry in a private way. It was not until after John was put into prison that Jesus formally began His public ministry.

John's disciples saw everything Jesus was doing and reported it to John. What did they see? The blind received sight, the deaf heard, the lame walked, the dead were raised, and Jesus' fame continued to grow. At the same time, the scribes and Pharisees who came from Jerusalem were becoming increasingly hostile toward Him.

Verse 19: “And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, ‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’”

Regarding John’s question, many Bible commentators have different interpretations. Some say that John was the Elijah who was to come. When Elijah was carrying out his ministry on earth, he also experienced failure. When Jezebel sought to kill him, he hurried to escape for his life. Later, he even began to doubt his own ministry and was unwilling to come out of the cave. Perhaps John, like Elijah, also fell into doubt.

However, I personally prefer Campbell Morgan’s explanation. John’s ministry was to bear witness to the Messiah. He also declared, “He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry.” He likely did not doubt Jesus Himself; rather, what he did not understand was the way Jesus carried out His work. Like all the Israelites, he longed for the coming of the Messiah. Now that the Messiah had come, it should have meant the rebuilding of the fallen tabernacle of David—in other words, the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. This was the understanding of the Messiah according to the Old Testament prophets.

John stood at the transition between the Old and New Testaments. He may be considered the last prophet of the Old Testament and also the first prophet of the New Testament. Yet his understanding of the Messiah was still the same as that of the former prophets. If the Messiah had come to establish the kingdom of Israel, why was the tyranny of Rome still allowed to continue? And he himself had been unjustly imprisoned—why had Jesus taken no action? He did not understand the way Jesus worked; therefore, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus.

Verse 20: “When the men had come to Him, they said, ‘John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, ‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’ ”

Jesus clearly understood that John’s real question was not a doubt about His identity as the Messiah, but rather that he did not understand the way the Messiah carried out His work. Therefore, Jesus’ response can be seen in two parts. The first

was that He allowed the two disciples to follow Him and observe what He was doing in His daily life and ministry; the second was the direct answer given to John.

Verse 21 : “And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight.”

Jesus did not seem eager to answer the two disciples’ question immediately. Instead, He kept them by His side. At that very time, He healed many people—we especially note the word many. Jesus’ daily life was extremely busy, and many people were in need. He healed them one by one, and He allowed John’s disciples to remain with Him and see how He helped each person individually.

Those who like to accomplish great things often prefer to stir up the crowds, establish a system, and then deal with matters collectively. In the face of the cruel Roman Empire, it might have seemed appropriate to organize the Jews to resist the Romans, overthrow their rule, and establish the kingdom of Israel. But this was not the way Jesus worked. He specifically wanted John’s two disciples to observe how He helped people one by one.

Jesus had no interest in mass movements. Instead, He was deeply concerned about each individual’s personal need. It is likely that after the two disciples had followed Him for some time and had seen what He did each day, Jesus then gave them a direct answer to their question.

Verse 22: “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them.’”

These things did not seem to match John’s expectation of a great work of establishing a nation; yet these were precisely what Jesus cared about most. What did He do? First, He caused the blind to see. The Gospel of John tells us, “In Him

was life, and the life was the light of men". When life comes, it brings light; and when light comes, the blind are able to see.

How often are the eyes of our heart blind and unable to see? Jesus first brings light so that we may see. And afterward? The lame walk. We are all weak and powerless in ourselves, unable to live the life God desires us to live, unable to have a healthy spiritual life. Life first enables us to see, and then it enables us to walk. Once we are able to walk in a healthy way, the lepers are cleansed.

Originally, we were separated from God, having nothing to do with Him, even being at enmity with Him. But today, through the life within us, we are able to live a normal Christian life. We are no longer isolated, because our sins are forgiven, and we can begin to live a holy life. After the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear. At that point, our ears are opened, and we are able to hear the still, small voice that God speaks to each one of us.

The noise of this world is extremely loud. Many times when God speaks to us, we cannot hear Him. But when we are cleansed and no longer separated from God, we can hear every gentle whisper He speaks within our hearts. Then the dead are raised. Death is something no one can overcome; the final outcome of human life is death. But thanks be to the Lord, we have within us the resurrection life. One day there will be resurrection from the dead.

Jesus performed many miracles on earth. Those miracles certainly had their value at the time, but more important was their spiritual significance. Today, every Christian should experience the blind seeing, the lame walking, the lepers being cleansed, the deaf hearing, and the dead being raised. After having these subjective experiences, there is the final matter: the poor have the gospel preached to them. We are to be sent out, like the twelve disciples, to preach the gospel to the poor.

The poor here especially refers to those who are poor in spirit. The world defines the poor and the rich by how much one possesses. But spiritually speaking, the definition depends on how much one needs. The one who needs more is poor; the one who needs less is rich. Everyone who is poor in spirit longs to know God. To each such person, the gospel must be preached. Who is sent to preach it? Those

who have experienced the blind seeing, the lame walking, the lepers being cleansed, the deaf hearing, and the dead being raised. These are the ones who continue the work of expanding God's kingdom, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of heaven to all who are in need.

John knew that his mission as the forerunner was to introduce Jesus, but he did not understand the way Jesus worked. Therefore, through John's two disciples, Jesus specifically revealed this to him. The establishment of God's kingdom does not begin with overthrowing the Roman government outwardly; it begins within each individual. It allows every needy person to personally and subjectively receive the benefits of the gospel: eyes that can see, a life empowered to walk, no more separation from God, ears able to hear every word God speaks to us, the living out of eternal life—and then, in turn, preaching the gospel to those in need.

Verse 23: “And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”

Finally, this was both a warning and a comfort from Jesus to John. Of course, Jesus knew that John had been in prison for a long time and was unable to understand what He was doing. Therefore, through John's two disciples, He especially revealed to John that His way of working was entirely of life and entirely inward. Then He encouraged John not to stumble because of Him, for he had already entered into a blessed realm. “And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me”.

Let us pray together: Lord, have mercy on us. Many times, like John the Baptist, we do not understand Your works. You have placed us in this present evil age, and there are many things happening around us that we cannot comprehend. Many times, we may even question Your methods and Your ways. Lord, strengthen our faith once again. Your work is hidden; Your work is of life, and it is inward. You desire to gain Your children one by one. Through their own spiritual experiences, may Your children preach the gospel to those in need; this is the only way You establish Your kingdom. Lord, help us today to bear witness for You in our daily living. Help us to have subjective experiences: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised. May these spiritual experiences become real in

us and also become the basis upon which we preach the gospel. Bless my life today.
I pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ. Amen!