

Not what I expected...

Luke 7:18-35

Sometimes what we get is not what we expected

Sometimes life, even as we follow God, is not what we expected and is not what we would choose.
Then what?

John the Baptist's life & ministry

Miraculous birth & prophecy: Prepare for _____

Parents (Zechariah and Elizabeth) could never have kids, and then they were past the age of having kids
An angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah: Luke 1:13-17

He preached to prepare people for Jesus' _____

John came "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Luke 3:7

John said: "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with _____. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable _____." Luke 3:16-17

He baptized Jesus * Luke 3:21-22

Then he spent the rest of his life in prison * Luke 3:19-20

John would later be beheaded by Herod while still in prison

And this is not what John expected or wanted...

Perhaps Luke wanted us to find ourselves in John's experiences and to learn with him

Luke 7:18-35

18-20: Sometimes God's ways don't fit our _____ and plans

John's anticipation: God's Kingdom is coming with power and judgment

Prophecy about John: he would come just before "the great and dreadful day of the LORD." Malachi 4:5

John said: "The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire...He will baptize with fire...The winnowing fork is in his hand...He will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire." Luke 3:9-17

John heard about Jesus' miracles and teaching

"News about Jesus spread..." Luke 7:17

Perhaps John expected something _____

Jesus' hometown tried to kill Him and Jesus left!

Jesus preached "Love and do good to your enemies" rather than bringing the judgment of God

Perhaps John expected something _____

Jesus came proclaiming freedom for the prisoners, yet John was in prison with little hope of release

→ Judgment will come in Jesus' second coming...

Perhaps Luke's readers felt like John the Baptist...

Perhaps _____ feel like John the Baptist

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life." Proverbs 13:12

Our hopes and prayers often seem to go unanswered

The longings of our hearts: peace (Shalom): health, wholeness, deep loving relationships, needs met, ...

Mystery of ministry: Is it doing any good? Why is it so hard?

Hopes deferred are so much harder when you believe in a God of all power and great compassion who answers prayer

21-23: Jesus points to initial evidence for faith, not _____

While John's disciples watch, Jesus does many physical and spiritual miracles → intentional answer?

Jesus' answer to John's doubts: look at the work God has _____

It is ONLY a beginning, with many ups and downs

Shocking words of Jesus: "Blessed are the people who don't leave God because of _____!"

Blessing comes when people trust Jesus even when there are still troubles and questions

24-30: All who trust God & Jesus have _____ greatness

John was very different from other leaders

Jesus affirms John the Baptist

A bold messenger who prepared people for God's Messiah and announced Jesus' arrival

John was the greatest because he was the final step before Jesus

Greater than Moses, Isaiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, ...

Even in John's doubts & being rejected by powerful

Yet the least in the Kingdom is greater than John!

Emphasis on the greatness of the Kingdom

Even for the lowest in society: tax collectors

Even a "nobody" or a "sinner" who genuinely trusts

Rejecting Jesus brings a great loss!

Even for the highest in society: Pharisees, rich, ...

Rejecting Jesus and Jesus' representatives (John and prophets) = rejecting God and God's blessing

31-35: Blessing is only for those who trust in and follow Jesus

"This generation" = people who reject God's ways

When God's ways don't match our expectations

When God's ways don't match our values

"Children of Wisdom" = those who trust God, even when it isn't easy or obvious

"Proved right" = declare and experience the unfolding good works and plans of God

The Big Idea

Blessing comes

when we _____ and _____ Jesus

even when He doesn't run things

the way we would expect or want

Jesus is the driver of His Kingdom, the renewal of all creation

With Jesus in the driver's seat, sometimes we question His driving...

_____ : we worry, despair, doubt, get angry, "long for Egypt", ...

_____ : we grumble & complain & criticize & question

_____ : we take the wheel or get a new driver or leave the car



Application

Trust Jesus...even when things aren't the way we expect or want

Luke's purpose: "...so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." Luke 1:4

Not merely historical accuracy

Rather: The absolute truth of the Gospel as the fundamental definition and foundation of our lives

Jesus is building His Kingdom and His Church

even when _____ go against God's ways

even when _____ (in power) go against God's ways

even when we have more troubles and pains and challenges

so we join His work as we trust Him with our lives

Faith is trusting the love, power, and grace of Jesus even when it seems like He has forgotten us or left us or led us astray or let the wrong people steer or...

His ways are often surprising, but never faulty or late

No human being is worthy of this kind of trust!

When Lazarus was sick, Jesus chose not to go see Him

Jesus let Lazarus die

so He could raise Lazarus from the dead

and teach the disciples (and us) that He can be trusted even in the most extreme troubles

John 6:66-69

Peter didn't say: "It all makes sense to me! This is easy!"

Peter did say: "We trust you alone as the Holy One of God."

Obey Jesus _____, even when the road isn't clear

Love and follow God with all that we have and are

Follow the road He has called us to with courage and hope

Love our neighbors as ourselves

Even our enemies and those who attack us

These things can be costly = suffering

"So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." 1 Peter 4:19

Rejoice that we are _____ of the Kingdom of God!

The "least" in Jesus' Kingdom is greater than Moses, or David, or Jeremiah, or Daniel, or Ezekiel, ... **Really!!**

Even when, and especially when, the other "kingdoms"

we're in (country, church, family, friends, ...)

aren't what (we think) they are supposed to be

Conclusion

An invitation to being blessed by God Himself: Trust and follow Jesus, and rejoice that you are His

Reflection Questions

1. Where in life are you struggling with the way God is running things (or letting them be run)?
2. In what ways are you tempted to question His driving? Consider our hearts (we worry, despair, doubt, get angry, "long for Egypt", ...), our mouths (we grumble & complain & criticize & question), and our feet (we take the wheel or get a new driver or leave the car)
3. Jesus said that the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than all who came before, since His Kingdom is so great, and in Christ we are citizens of it forever! What helps you grasp the unspeakable joy that this should be ours because of this unimaginable gift?