Wisdom’s Vindication

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 11:1-19
Focus Scripture: Matthew 11:1-19

Key Verse: “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.” Matthew 11:19

Matthew 11:7-19 (NRSV)

7 As they went away, 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?
8 What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces.
9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.
10 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.’
11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.
12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.
13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came;
14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.
15 Let anyone with ears listen!
16 ‘But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,
17 ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’
18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’;
19 the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”
VOCABULARY

- **Wilderness** – A dry, barren, unfertile land.
- **Prophet** – God’s spokesperson, the divinely called person who announces the will of God to people.
- **Prophesy** – To be able to reveal the will of God about future events.
- **Glutton** – Someone who eats too much.
- **Vindicate** – To show that somebody or something is justified or correct.

INTRODUCTION

“Carla, Carmen, Ken, and Scott,” Mr. Barnes hollered outside, “please come in so your mother and I can talk with you.” The parents sat down at the kitchen table as their children came inside.

“We are going to have a party tomorrow evening after church. We will barbeque the meats and purchase the rest from that new store, Wegmans. Your cousin, Jeffery, is the head chef there and makes delicious side dishes. Pastor Washington and her husband already confirmed they are coming. Of course your aunts and uncles will be here. Do you want to invite anyone?”

“Mom, I think I will invite Darnell. I’ll text him an invitation.” Mrs. Barnes dreaded the thought of Carla’s new friend, Darnell, attending.

“Dad, is it okay if I go buy some candles to put on the tables to freshen up the room? People have body odors.” Scott looked over at Carla.

“I don’t understand why every time I invite Darnell over the family complains he smells strange. I’m not going to stop being his friend because he lives in the homeless shelter. None of you really understand what’s going on.” Carla jumped up from the
table so fast, her soda can tipped over on the table. Her brother Ken soaked up the soda off the table with napkins. Her father followed her into the living room.

“Carla, help me to understand Darnell’s situation.” Dad sat down on the floor next to Carla.

“Dad, I promised Darnell I wouldn’t tell anyone about him suffering with cancer. The treatments make him sick every day. Darnell goes in the bathroom to vomit and often doesn’t have a change of clothes. He is bullied at school. I’m trying to be a good friend. So I don’t let the way he smells bother me.”

“Carla, I am sorry we misunderstood what was happening. Darnell can visit anytime. Tomorrow remind me to ask your brothers to look in their closets to find clothes Darnell may like. We can offer them to him.”

Why was Darnell misunderstood by others? How can we overcome misunderstandings about people? In today’s lesson we discover John the Baptist’s and Jesus’ unusual behaviors were misunderstood, but later proved wise.

BIBLE STORY

Matthew was a Jewish tax collector who became one of Jesus’ disciples. His book emphasizes Jesus is the Messiah in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Matthew wanted to clearly prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Matthew wrote especially to the Jews, who still did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

In Chapter 10, Jesus prepares to send out the twelve disciples. He gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and heal the sick. Jesus prepared and warned them about the persecution that was to come from being disciples of Christ. The disciples began to understand that the cost of becoming followers of Christ would be great.
Jesus, in chapter eleven, teaches about the rejection of the message about the kingdom. John the Baptist was the one sent to prepare the way for Jesus’ coming (Matthew 3). He called for the people to, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (v. 3:2). John the Baptist had been put in prison by Herod because John spoke out against him marrying his own sister-in-law. It was a sin. But John’s warning against it cost him his freedom. While sitting in prison, John began to doubt Jesus really was the Messiah. John sent a few of his disciples to ask Jesus whether or not Jesus truly was the Messiah. Jesus’ response was to point John to Jesus’ acts of healing, raising the dead, and preaching the gospel to the poor (vs. 11:4-5). The evidence demonstrated that Jesus was the Messiah.

After John’s disciples left, Jesus spoke to the crowds. Jesus’ speech to the crowd asserts John’s importance and the anointing given to him by God. Jesus asked the people if they came to see something as insignificant as frail grass blowing in the wind (v. 11:7). He was about to make a very important point. “See, I am sending my messenger . . .” Verse 10 is a paraphrase of Malachi 3.1. John was to prepare the world for a royal visitation by the eternal king.

Many would be greater in the kingdom of heaven than John because they would see and know Christ and his sacrifice on the cross (v. 11:11). John simply announced the coming kingdom but his message was rejected. There also would be great violence against the kingdom from those who opposed it and sinners. Moreover, John took Elijah’s prophetic role as he confronted sin and pointed people to God (vs. 11:13-14). The people misunderstood John’s actions and called him a demon. They also misunderstood Jesus’ actions and considered Jesus “a glutton, and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (vs. 11:18-19). But God (wisdom) had sent both John and Jesus who were vindicated by their works.
LIFE APPLICATION

We all have been misunderstood and/or criticized at some point in our lives. Think about some of the words people use in criticizing others and write them down. Think about wise (encouraging) words we can use instead and write them down. The next time someone is being criticized, think about using wise (encouraging) words instead to help them.

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John the Baptist was called by God to prepare the way for the Messiah (Jesus Christ). John’s appearance and actions were misunderstood by many. Mark 1:6 says, “Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.” Draw a picture of John depicting what you think he looked like. If you were alive during that time and encountered John the Baptist, what would be your first impressions of him? After you got to know John, do you think your opinion would change?
People still misunderstand who Jesus is. What evidence can you share with others that would confirm Jesus is the Messiah? What changes have occurred in your life? Why is it okay to be unpopular when you are a follower of Jesus Christ?

**SUMMARY**

It is important to use wisdom when making choices. The wisest choice is to accept Jesus Christ. His sacrificial act of dying on the cross for our sins proves God chose Jesus to save the world. After we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit will guide us in making proper choices. We will be criticized by, and unpopular with, those in the world. But our deeds will show everyone we are wise Christians committed to following God. In the end, our reward will be eternal life in heaven.

**CLOSING DEVOTIONS**

Prayer: Gracious God, we love you. Thank you for sacrificing yourself on our behalf. We commit to following your Word and walking in wisdom no matter the criticism that comes from those in the world. Amen.

Closing Hymn: “Jesus, We Look to Thee” (#421 - *AME Church Hymnal*)