Proving Your Wisdom

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 11:1-19
Focus Scripture: Matthew 11:7-19

Key Verse: 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.”
**WORD POWER!!!**

- **John the Baptist** – A family member of Jesus who dressed strangely, ate a special diet, hung out in the wilderness and challenged people to repent and turn back to God.
- **Prophets and the Law** – Code words for the books of the Old Testament.
- **Elijah** – An Old Testament prophet who called the people of Israel to repent and turn back to God.
- **Son of Man** – Title Jesus uses for himself to show he’s the Messiah.
- **Glutton** – Person who eats a large amount of food.
- **Drunkard** – Person who gets drunk a lot.
- **Vindicated** – Proved right.

**GETTING READY!!!**

Greater Blessing AME Church’s youth ministry was growing, and Pastor Tony wanted to acknowledge the people who helped it grow. Two Greater Blessing young people were drawing kids to God in usual ways. Sean was using his skills in sports to help kids make meaningful connections with God. He didn’t pretend to be anything he wasn’t. He showed up with a basketball or football most days. Sean’s clothes and hair were often messy. Yet, he could help other kids apply Bible lessons to their lives in a powerful way. That’s why Pastor Tony decided to make Sean the youth bible Study leader. It’s also why Pastor Tony allowed him to do the Bible Study on the basketball court.

Likewise, Justine was using her welcoming personality to get people connected with God and the church. She brought kids to church who hadn’t ever been before. Then she sat with
them so they could understand how service flowed. If they showed an interest in something, Justine encouraged them to follow through with it. This led one homeless teen to offer his services as a Christian comedian during the church anniversary celebration. It led another teen to design logos for the different ministries in the church. That’s why Pastor Tony decided to make Justine the youth representative to the Evangelism Commission. It’s also why Pastor Tony wouldn’t allow other members of the Commission to make her wear a badge or uniform.

A few people in the church complained to the stewards about what Pastor Tony had done. They said Sean couldn’t be a Bible study leader because he didn’t hold the classes in the church building. They also said that Justine spent too much time with the wrong kind of people to be given such responsibility.

The people expected Pastor Tony to keep Sean and Justine from ministering after hearing their complaints. Instead, Pastor Tony defended Sean and Justine. He said the growth in the youth ministry proved Sean and Justine were making wise and godly choices. Then Pastor Tony told Sean and Justine to keep up the good work.

**INTO GOD’S WORD!!!**

John the Baptist and Jesus also had some critics. They say that John is too strict. He wears strange clothes. He eats weird food. John does his ministry in the desert. He also says EVERYBODY needs to repent and turn back to God. He’s the kind of guy who doesn’t back down from sharing God’s truth with people no matter who they are. John dared to tell Herod
Antipas that it was wrong for Herod to marry his brother’s wife. That landed John in prison!

Of course, the critics say Jesus is too easy going. He spends time with sinners and tax collectors. He ministers to people who aren’t even Jewish. In short, he’s a rule breaker. Guess how Jesus responds to all of his critics? He tells them that they need to stop pre-judging people like him and John the Baptist. Instead, they need to see if the way they’re ministering is effective. If so, then the people will know that John and Jesus are behaving in a wise and godly way.

**Activity #1 – The Right Person for the Job.** Create a job description for a prophet and a job description for the Messiah/Savior.

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Today’s lesson reminds us that people can be mistreated even when they do wise and godly things. Some people will spend so much time criticizing the way a thing is done, that they can’t celebrate the result of lives won for God. Others just need a gentle reminder to focus on the results of the actions of those they criticize. Then, they can appreciate the way God’s working, even if it still seems strange and usual to them. That way they can begin to encourage the people doing the wise and godly thing. Or, they can be like Jesus.

**Activity #2 – Jesus Has My Back.** Show how it feels to know Jesus is backing those who choose to do wise and godly things. (Hint: You can draw something, paint something, write a poem, rap, song, or skit.)

**REMIX!!!**

Sometimes the best person for the job doesn’t look or act like we expect. We discount them because they don’t look like we think they should. Or, we refuse to give them a chance
because they spend time with people who don’t think they’ll be welcome inside a church. Yet, none of these things mean God isn’t using these people to draw others to God. It just means they’re working in a different way than we’re used to seeing. It also means we need to wait and see if what they’re doing gets results. If they do, God has proven that those people’s actions are wise and godly. And, if God does that, we need to encourage them so they’ll keep up the godly work.

PRAISE THE LORD!!!

If I stand out as weird or strange
When I’m doing what you ask of me
And people make me feel sad or mad
Help me keep doing what I’m doing
Prove that what I’m doing is wise and godly
As others come to know you through me
For that’s the best victory.