



READ LUKE 7:18-23

John the Baptist was in prison, and he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was really the one they've been expecting. Jesus heals many people from diseases, distress and evil spirits, and then tells John's disciples to go tell him what they have just seen. Jesus' example is his answer.

REMEMBER: Luke 7:19

*"Are you the one we've been expecting,
or are we still waiting?"*

MORE THOUGHTS

Where does this story end? Does it end with Jesus convincing the people that he is the Messiah? Does it end with John the Baptist's death? Does it end with healing and wholeness in this ancient community? Or is this story still unfolding today? Do you have a part to play in this story, even now, so many generations later? Are you the one who was sent to continue this work? Or are we waiting for someone else?

Jesus says this to John's messengers: "Go back to John and tell him what you have seen and heard – the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the good news is being preached to the poor."

Where do you see these things happening today? Can you find examples in your faith community, your neighborhood, your country, or the world of this kind of hope and wholeness? Who is leading the charge? What does it really look like to partner with the Messiah in this work? And will God's story end before all the pain and isolation in the world are wiped out, overpowered by love and wholeness? Can you imagine a world free of tears, filled with hope? Is that a realistic end to this story? Is your example your answer? How?

NEXT WEEK: Luke 7:36-50

! SURPRISE

DAY 1: Who is Jesus, really? Have you ever stopped to ponder this question? Does – and should – your answer impact the way you live? If so, in what way?

! RELATIONSHIP

DAY 2: Does the way Jesus lives impact how we live together as a community of faith? Does it impact us politically? Does it impact who we serve or how we serve them? Does it impact the way we worship? Does it impact the way we treat each other? Does the way Jesus lives impact the way we see our community and our place in it? Does it affect our vision, our mission, or the way we intend to be a connecting church? How?

! SURPRISE

DAY 3: Do your expectations for Jesus match up with the reality of Jesus' life? Or are you expecting something different than what Jesus actually delivers? Is it possible to discern what Jesus' life is really about, or is that open to interpretation? Do you see Jesus represented in very different ways by different people?

? WONDER

DAY 4: Why are our opinions and expectations so varied when we're all reading the same book? How do we wade through all the differences? How can we know if we're following the right Jesus? Is there only one?

? WONDER

DAY 5: Jesus responds to John's question about his identity with examples of healing, wholeness and resurrection. Yet John remains in jail, soon to be beheaded. Why doesn't Jesus break John out of prison? Does John expect Jesus' help? Would you? If you were John, would you be hurt, or even angry? Could you have faith in this Jesus who leaves you in prison? Have you ever been in that position? How does it feel? Is Jesus a betrayal? Of what?

! SURPRISE

DAY 6: Does anything about our theology or narrative change with the realization that this Jesus does not appear to guarantee your physical safety or freedom? Does that mess up your expectations about the savior's purpose? How do we know this Jesus is really the Messiah when, like John, our circumstances don't seem to change? Is there anything in this story that can lead us forward?

! PRESENCE

DAY 7: Jesus is present in this story, but John refers to him as the one who "is to come." At what point do we recognize Jesus' presence here, now, and in this world, rather than waiting for a Messiah to show up later? How does acknowledging Jesus' presence now change us?