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Luke

Chapter 3 - A Different Kind of Authority

An Unusual Reception (vs. 18-20)

Luke 3:18-20: So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people. But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done, Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.

John is preparing the way for the gospel. He's even proclaiming the good news. "Gospel" meaning "good news". We sure need good news, don't we? Good news. What is the good news? Well, Scripture tells us what the good news is. "You should call His name Jesus, for He shall

save His people from their sins.” That's the good news. That it would have attached to it everlasting life is a magnificent point, especially when you come to John 3:16. “For God so loved you that He gave His only begotten Son, that you would not perish but have everlasting life.” Ecclesiastes says that God has placed eternity in our hearts. There's something inside of us that says, “There's got to be something more than this.” And to hear somebody say, “There is,” is such a wonderful thing. I'm drawn to that, aren't you? The wonderful gospel and that I can be saved from the things that I have done that have offended God. And they totally be wiped out as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more for God is faithful and just to forgive you of your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness; to be clean. Think about that, clean. That's unbelievable because the guilt and the regret and all the things. To actually understand that we can begin new. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away; all things have become new. That's a wonderful gospel.

John will say, "Prepare the way of the Lord." How does he prepare the way of the Lord? Well, the way that the road is prepared is the Law. As Galatians will say, it's a tutor to lead us to Christ. The Law of God is not something that is oppressive or hurtful. It is something that is freeing.

When God tells you, "Do this" or "Don't do that," it is for your good. It's to keep you safe. The Jews actually saw it as kind of like walls that you would build around you to protect you from the harms of the world. So, God has prepared the way for us through the Law.

If you look with me, in particular in Luke 3, it says this,

(Luke 3:4) "as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

"THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS,

'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,

MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.

(Luke 3:5) 'EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED,

AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT

LOW;

THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT,

AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH;

(Luke 3:6) AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.”””

It is a kind of preparing the heart and I believe that the Law, as it did come first in Scripture, is there to prepare the heart. What is it that God is looking for and what is the heart of God? You begin to see, and you come to a passage like Deuteronomy 6, where it says, “And you need to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. You need to think about Him and talk about Him. These are the commandments.” And you go, “Well, commandments? That’s what I want to do. I want to have a relationship with God.” You realize that these commandments are really kind of testing your heart. It is the nature of man to rebel against somebody telling him to do something. Once again, that's in Romans 7, that once we hear the Law, we kind of bristle and kind of back away, but the purpose of the Law was to reveal things to us. It was to reveal things about ourselves.

In fact, if you look with me in Romans 3, it'll kind of clarify this within the text.

(Romans 3:19) “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

(Romans 3:20) because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”

Paul will go on to say, “Had the Law not said this, I would have thought maybe it was ok to do that.” But the Law begins to reveal things in our life. Now, when we hear certain things that God tells us to do or not to do and we begin to resist, that's not that the Law is off or saying something oppressive; that's demonstrating that your heart's off. So, the Law is kind of like a light that shines. In fact, actually John is described in the Gospel of John as a lamp that comes shining. If you hate the lamp, you're going to really hate the sun, and Malachi refers to Christ as the “Sun of righteousness.” He will come and you realize that in the beginning of John 1, in Him is light, life; in the life was the light of men. You begin to realize that it's His light that begins to shine. Well, you also begin to

see that the nature of man is to resist the light because it exposes stuff. Now, what it exposes are things that need to be exposed so that you can have life, but nobody likes to be corrected.

So, if you look with me in John 3. That kind of explains this within the passage in John 3, that the judgment of the Light comes, and it exposes things.

It reads this way,

(John 3:19) “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.”

You tell me to do something right, and if it goes against what I want to do, then I'm not going to like what you have to say. I'm going to reject it.

It goes on and says this,

(John 3:20) “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”

(John 3:21) “But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.””

So, the passage is telling us that as people begin to hear the Law, the truth, they feel a conviction. Other people might feel a resistance. The question really is, how does it strike you?

As we come to this passage in the Gospel of Luke, what we're going to see are really two camps. One clearly within the passage, you begin to see those who are receptive. Then you see on the other end, Herod, which is really going to be the poster boy for those that are repulsed. You're going to see the people and the prominent. You're going to see the penitent and the proud, and there's going to be a separation. Of course, you understand that Christ came to separate the light from the darkness. So, you have this interesting picture of Light coming into the world and how there's just a clarity of these are God's people and these are not. Paul writes to Timothy, and he says, “The Lord knows those who are His.” That's an interesting statement, and the problem is

we don't know until the Light comes. The question is, how are you going to respond to the Light when it shines? So, John begins to come with this lamp as the Gospel of John says, as he prepares the way of the Lord, and there is a breaking up of soil. When you break up soil, you turn over some rocks. You never know what's underneath those things, do you? All kinds of things begin to reveal themselves. So, as John begins to go, he does this.

Now at the very beginning of this, we see this kind of mass of humanity coming to John. They're referred to as multitudes. "*Ochlos*" is the Greek word that is used, which makes reference to a mob. It's an interesting mix of all kinds of people.

The way that it's put here in Luke 3:7, that John begins saying to the *ochlos*, the multitudes, the mob,

"You brood of Vipers, who warned you..."

Now, once again in Matthew, we have that directed specifically to the Pharisees and the scribes, but in this particular passage, Luke is letting us know that he was pretty cut and dry about what the truth was which is one of the qualities of the Law. It's black and white. You know

what truth is. I mean, it's very clear what it says. So, the clarity of it begins to be conveyed in the passage. John the Baptist is much like Elijah, as Scripture would tell us that he comes with just this clarity of mind, and that's part of the preparation. If you feel a resistance, there's something wrong with you. Now, as the passage goes on, then different ones start coming to him and they begin asking, "What should we do?" That's the right response. As people begin to hear the word of God, they begin to hear the message of God. It's not just simply the message of how wonderful it is you get to go to heaven, but it's the message of you can be saved from your sins. This is a very clear message, that you shouldn't embrace the sins that you have so much made a part of your life and now you need to push away from those things. So, he begins to convey this wonderful message of the gospel that would take you from your sins and save your soul.

As John then talks to the different ones, he talks to the tax collectors, and he talks to the soldiers. Once again, I think I made mention of this, but I just want to emphasize the ones that he mentions in the text, the publicans and

the soldiers, are still those that are taking orders. They're under somebody. They're not in a position that is prominent and marvelous, but these are people that are working for somebody. The bottom line is that they're used to taking orders. They're used to people telling them, "You can't do that." They go, "Oh ok." Now, you take a person that's not used to somebody telling them what to do, and you walk up to them and go, "You need to do that." They go, "Who you talking to?" They're almost immediately offended because they're not used to people telling them what to do. Quite frankly, they don't think they like it. These are what would be called more the prominent, whereas we come into this text, and we're going to be looking at the differentiation between the prominent, i.e. Herod in the text and the people, which is not going to be in this particular text the mob, but those that are receptive and they're going to be referred to as the "*laos*". That is to say, a group of people that think the same. It's interesting that he actually makes that transition from the mob because everybody's thinking their own way and going their own way and thinking all sorts of thoughts; to now, you have a group of people

that are going, “What do we need to do?” And those are the kind of people that start coming in and we don't really think of John in this way, but John actually begins to encourage them. The word that is used is “*parakaleō*,” which means he comes along their side.

So, if you look at the passage,

(Luke 3:18) “So with many other exhortations...”

That's the word “encouragements”. This is John encouraging. He's not poking you between the eyes, but he's actually encouraging you.

“So with many other exhortations (encouragements) he preached the gospel...”

The good news.

“... to the people.” (*laos*)

To those that were like-minded and of the same race.

They think the same. There is a kind of unifying, and really, it's kind of a precursor to the church, because the church is “*ekklēsia*”; that is to say, the called-out ones.

That picture of “*ekklēsia*” or the church are those people that have been called out and now they become a people.

Peter will say, “You were once not a people, but now you are the people of God.” So, we become a different group of people of our own nation, of our own royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. Peter will say you become a people for His own possession. So, there's a distinction there within the text. The distinction really comes about because of the message. How do you receive the message when you hear the truth, whether it be the truth of the Law, whether it be the truth of the gospel? Are you receptive to it? And if you are receptive to it, it's demonstrating your heart. Jesus will call you good soil in the sense that you're receiving the word of God, implanted, which is able to save your soul.

(Luke 3:18) “So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people.”

(Luke 3:19) “But when Herod...”

Now, we're seeing a contrast. It's to be noted and we've made reference to this before, but the name “Herod” means “hero”. Here again, it seems like everybody, and their brother is a hero. So, somebody does something remotely nice and they're heroes. So, we love that word,

but it just simply elevates man to a position that really doesn't belong to him. You want to know who the hero is? It's Jesus Christ. He's the One that saved your soul. He's the One that saved your life. Nevertheless, we have those that are proclaiming to be hero. This is Herod as the tetrarch, which means out of the four divided parts, he has one of the sections. So, tetrarch just refers to that. He is Herod Antipas. To describe him, we don't have a lot of Scripture making reference. I will tell you this that in about 8 to 10 years, he'll actually be put out of his position and put out by the Caesar. So, God will deal with him shortly. Nevertheless, this is the guy that will abuse and ultimately take the head off of John. In this particular passage, it's going to tell us that he locks him up at the end of the verse, but this is the guy that does that. What we know about him is that he's there at the crucifixion and historically, Josephus writes that he had written some things against Pilate, and they were not very friendly toward each other. Pilate, being the governor of Rome and of course, Herod being more the king of this particular region. So, always kind of at odds. They had been until Jesus, and when it came to Jesus and then

Jesus was brought before the courts of Herod, as Pilate turned Him over to him to let him do something because he's kind of more Jewish than he is. So, he turns him over to Jesus, and Herod sees this as a moment of entertainment and actually has his soldiers dress Him up as a king, and he mocks and makes fun of Him. This will be this Herod that does that. So, you have an interesting picture of a person that really has no sense of reverence towards God in any way and has no concern for people. The passage that we're going to read becomes a very practical passage. Because as John begins to proclaim this good news of the message, it's to those that would embrace the way of God. The Book of Matthew would convey the sense of the rule of God is coming and so we should rejoice. It makes reference to the kingdom of heaven over and over again. It's talking about God's way of thinking; His rule; His standards. Thank God His standards are different than ours. His ways are higher than ours and that He comes in fairness. He doesn't manipulate or use people or use the position. Anybody that's followed any kind of politics realize that people in power love to do this and love to exploit their position for

their own desires. Well, Herod was definitely that kind of person. So, he's kind of described; there'll be some Pharisees that come to Jesus, and they go, "I think we heard that Herod wants to kill you." And Jesus goes, "You tell that old fox that I'm going to go here and there and I'm going to do basically whatever I want to do. So, he's not going to thwart me." There's a pretty interesting dialogue that Jesus used, but the fact that Jesus would refer to him as this old sly dog is telling us that He didn't have much respect for him at all.

As we come to the passage, then John is dealing specifically with him. Up to this point, he's dealt with a mob and now he's dealt with those that really are serious. Those who are serious are coming up, like we read with the publicans, "What should we do?" Those are the guys that are working for the main tax gatherers. Then the soldiers, those are the guys that are working for the guys in charge. So, they're coming to say, "What do we do?" because they're used to taking orders. So, He gives them orders. He says, "Do this. Make sure you do that." And

they go, "Thank You." So, they become a people because they're receptive to the things of the Lord.

We're going to see now that John comes into the presence of Herod in verse 19,

"But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him..."

Oh, wait a minute. He was encouraging the people, but Herod, he is reproofing. Now, the word that's used in here, the emphasis is on shaming which it's bad enough that you might try to correct somebody in charge but then put them to shame? "Shame on you." I could just see him, "Shame on you. You shouldn't be doing this."

In James 1, James says humility is a good thing. Kind of the way that he puts it is, he says, "Let the people of humble circumstance glory in their high position and let the rich man glory in his humiliation because like the flowering grass, he will fade away." Now in this case, basically what he's talking about is many people are kind of already living in humble circumstances. They were raised in humble circumstances. If you were to walk up to a person that you know had kind of lived in poverty all their life and you'd say something like, "You know, you

need to sacrifice.” They’d go, “That’s my life.” As James would go on to say, “Don't you know that it's the poor of this world that are rich in faith?” because they've had to go into this. Now, it doesn't mean that all of them humble themselves, but it means that they're in these humble circumstances. So, they have, if I could put it this way, a road that's more paved to go to Christ because they're already at a point where somebody walks up to them, and says, “You need to change this” and they go, “Ok, I'll give that a try.” So, because they've already felt the sense of, they need to change. You take a person in a high position, and you tell them that they need to change, the only thing that will change them is a sense of humiliation. Something has to fall; bankruptcy; could be having nothing to do with money; could have to do with your family. But there has to be some kind of humiliation in their life that brings a humbling in their life, and that's what James is saying. In this particular text, John was the humiliation in Herod’s life. He goes up to him and he goes, “You did something you shouldn't have done.”

Now, we read in the passage what that was, and it reads this way,

(Luke 3:19) “But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother’s wife...”

So, Herod has taken his brother's wife. Actually, from what we understand historically, he talked her into leaving her husband. This is Herod’s brother Phillip. So, he did two things that were horrific. One is he was treacherous towards his brother, and now he's treacherous towards his wife. Of course, then he's compounding the problem with taking in this woman as well. Ultimately, he will find himself taking bad advice and being thrust out of his own kingdom.

(Luke 3:19) “But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done.”

There are two words that could be used in the text for “wicked”. One is “*kakos*” which means “wicked” or “bad in character”. It doesn't use that one. It uses “*ponēros*”

which is “bad in effect”. Scripture is wanting us to see all of the things that have hurt people. Why is John correcting him? Why does God even give us the Law? Because you're hurting people. Scripture says, “You shall not covet.” “What's wrong with me coveting?” You're hurting somebody by coveting. You're hurting somebody by not being faithful. You're hurting somebody by lying. You're hurting somebody by stealing, but there's something in us that has that sense of entitlement that says, “I can have whatever I want. So, what are You telling me what to do?”

John is coming in and shaming him and he says, “You shouldn't have done that.” Now, it seems bizarre that he would come to a king, but you have to remember he's king over this region of the Jews, and he has been coming to the feast in Jerusalem. So, he is kind of in quasi external practice, a follower of God. So, he has conveyed himself as being that kind of person and John is going, “You say you are. I'm going to take you your word.” So, he begins to convey to him, “You shouldn't be doing these kinds of things.” Now, this is the nation in which God has

come to save, and what is John's position? He's been called to prepare the way to get everybody thinking right. How do you prepare the way for salvation? Very, very easy. Humble yourself. That's how you prepare. So, how do you humble yourself? Well, you begin to hear, "You hurt somebody. Did you see that you hurt somebody?" and you go, "I feel really bad about that." And that's why these people are coming up to John going, "What do we need to do?" He goes, "Well, let me tell you what you need to do. Stop thinking of yourself."

Back up into Chapter 3 and look with me,

(Luke 3:10) "And the crowds were questioning him, saying, 'Then what shall we do?'"

(Luke 3:11) And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share..."

"You haven't been sharing, you haven't been thinking of other people. You see somebody over there shivering and you go, 'Well, you look cold.' I think you need to be thinking about some other people here."

“... ‘The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.’”

“Boy, do you look hungry. Boy, this hamburger is good.”

(Luke 3:12) “And some tax collectors also came to be baptized...”

Publicans, which are basically subcontractors.

“... and they said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’”

(Luke 3:13) And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.’”

“Look at the hurt that you've caused by coming into people's life and taking more than you should. They are already barely making ends meet and you're exploiting your position.” The same thing with the soldiers.

(Luke 3:14) “Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, ‘And what about us, what shall we do?’ ...”

It's very interesting that the world at this juncture, though, people want to do the right thing, has become so callous and so integrated with the world's way of thinking that they really, literally are scratching their heads going, “So, how do you be nice?” And that the Law is there to

help you think the right way. That's what it does.

Remember the rich man that comes to Jesus, and he goes, "What do I need to do to get into heaven?" He goes, "Well, keep the Law." He goes, "I've done that. I'm really good at that sort of stuff." And He goes, "Sell all your possessions and give to the poor." Well, one of the things that the Law says is that you need to actually care about others as you would yourself. So, that would be giving your possessions to the poor. If you saw that they were poor, if you loved them like you loved yourself, you would give them something, right? Of course, he can't do that. Of course, the greatest law is "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind." And he couldn't do that. So, the two greatest laws Jesus caught him on.

The point is that we have in our head, "I am doing the right thing" and God says, "Ok, then what about this?" And there are things that He begins to reveal in a very practical way. Well, John hits Herod in a very practical way, and that is in the relationships. Up to this point, we've been seeing how people relate to people around them, but now we've come into the family.

The Book of Malachi really dovetails with John's ministry. How do we know that? Well, come to the end of the book of Malachi, and if you don't know where it is, it's right before Matthew. So, it's easy to find. But Malachi at the end of the book, in Chapter 4, it reads this way and is actually quoted in the Gospels as referring to John the Baptist.

(Malachi 4:1) “For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff...”

Remember Luke 3:17, “His winnowing fork is in His hand...” God is going to be separating. Every man proclaims his loyalty, but a faithful man who can find? It's one thing to say you're faithful; it's another thing to say, “Can you stay today?” “No, I can't stay today.” So, the light will be shining on you.

“... will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.”

(Malachi 4:2) “But for you who fear My name...”

So, there's a clear distinction. One is that the chaff is going to become evident and burned. The other is,

“But for you who fear My name, the sun...”

That would be an interesting picture of the sun exposing everything, right? Look, when everything's in the dark, you don't see all the problems, but that sun comes out, and you can see everything pretty clearly.

“... the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.

(Malachi 4:3) “You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day...”

It's kind of that picture of the winnowing and the burning of the chaff.

“... which I am preparing.”

(Malachi 4:4) “Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.”

“This is the Law. Remember the Law because the Law is going to be preparing you.” When I think about what the

Law says and things that I have done that were wrong, it should soften my heart. It should be preparing a way.

“Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.

(Malachi 4:5) “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.””

Luke 1:17 says that John will actually come in the spirit and the power of Elijah and Jesus will say, “And I tell you, if you care to believe it, he is Elijah.” Very interesting text.

So, it says,

(Malachi 4:6) “He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

That's a strange way to end, isn't it? What he's talking about is that it all begins at home. Preparation actually begins at home. How do you treat one another at home? I've seen people that can be very gracious and very

thoughtful of people outside their home, at least for 5 minutes. But those same people, I've seen them be very abusive to the very people in their home. It's one of the reasons why you have the list for deacons and elders, and it says "Must be one who manages his own household well." Because it really is the beginning of relationships. If you know how to have relationships here, then yes, it prepares you for ministry there. So, when John sets out on his mission, he is preparing the way and he's saying, "You've got to think straight. So, this is where you've gone wrong." And by the time he finishes, you know what you're going to say? "I need a Savior." That's exactly what you're going to say, if in fact you're receptive. If in fact you're not, you're going to be repulsed and you're going to say, "I don't want to hear this." This book, Malachi is written in particular, to priests that perceive themselves as holy, and Malachi is going, "You guys aren't even close because you show no respect for God, you show no honor for God, and it shows in your relationship with one another." I have found when people elevate God, they have no problem with relationships. When they see God and put Him in the position in which He's exalted then

they have respect for one another. But you show me a person that has no respect for God, and I'll show you a person that doesn't respect his relationships. This is being seen throughout the book of Malachi.

Let me just show you a couple of pictures of this and we won't spend a lot of time on this. In Malachi 1, just to let you know who he's talking to and what the message is focusing on,

(Malachi 1:6) “A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?” says the LORD...”

That's a good question, isn't it?

And of course, “How have we defiled You?” And He goes, “Well, the sacrifices that you bring. I mean, you're bringing blind animals, and you're going, ‘I can't use that animal. So, I'll give that one to God.’” and that's what He says in verse 8.

If you drop down,

(Malachi 1:14) “But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished

animal to the Lord, for I am a great King,” says the LORD of hosts, “and My name is feared among the nations.””

That's one of the reasons why we tell you, “Give the first to God.” You go, “What difference does it make?” It starts the process. If in fact you're respectful towards God, you'll not only honor Him, but you'll be receptive to when He says, “Don't do that,” to somebody in your house, perhaps, and that's where it's going to begin.

So, it starts off, and it says in Malachi 2,

(Malachi 2:1) “And now this commandment is for you, O priests.

(Malachi 2:2) “If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name,” ...”

Obviously, all through the passage and all through this book, it's about “You need to honor Me.” What's interesting is that it dovetails specifically into the personal relationship. As you drop on down, of course, He says, “I've given you a covenant of life, and I've given you this covenant of life and peace so that you might give it to others.” God has called us to that.

But drop on down,

(Malachi 2:10) “Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?”

(Malachi 2:11) “Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD which He loves and has married the daughter of a foreign god.”

Now, He doesn't stop there, and this where the tie is; remember, John is the forerunner, and he comes in the spirit of Elijah and his job is to prepare the hearts, and where does it begin? At home.

So, if you drop on down with me, it says this,

(Malachi 2:13) ““This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.”

(Malachi 2:14) “Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

(Malachi 2:15) “But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.

(Malachi 2:16) “For I hate divorce” ...”

Why do you think John is so hard on Herod with this? He has been called to prepare the way. You chose this spouse. You can't blame God. You chose this person, and you can't be faithful to the person you chose? And you made a covenant with them. You made a promise. That's why he starts off with, “You made a covenant with Me. You can't keep any promises, can you?” “Oh, I can keep promises.” “Ok, so how are you doing with your wife?” “Oh, not too good. I had to ditch her.” “Ok. So, you're not good with your promises.” So, he begins to reveal the heart in a very real way. Herod could sit up in his throne

and say, "I'm a pretty good king." And John just cuts to the quick, he goes, "Did you do this?" And Herod has no answers. He can't rationalize. He can't in any way talk his way out of this one, and now what does he do? Well, as the text goes on and reads, it says he locked John up, among many other wicked things that he did. Once you stop being receptive to the word of God that says you need to confess your sins, you have now gone on the side of the darkness, and there is this interesting separation; you've become chaff, so to speak. So, the Gospel is wanting us to see this division.

I want to kind of end with this passage, in Luke 7. If you turn there with me. This particular passage, to me, is very eye opening when you consider the theme of the Gospel of Luke. I mean, here you have this message from God, the God of the universe, and He comes down, He goes, "I have good news." That alone, I mean, I'd want to be there. You would think that all the dignitaries of all the world would be first in line, but as you go in the Gospel of Luke, they are the ones that don't go and it's the common people that are used to people telling them what to do,

that go, “So, what do You want us to do?” And those are the ones that go into the kingdom. A very interesting way of putting it, but it's also put this way in Luke 7,

(Luke 7:1) “When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum.”

Which is, at this juncture, His hometown. This is where He's living. He moved out of Nazareth, moved to Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee.

(Luke 7:2) “And a centurion’s slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die.”

(Luke 7:3) When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave.”

So, he obviously is someone that is able to have a relationship because he loves this servant that he has, and to such a degree that he's actually respected in the community by his Jewish friends. We will understand why, because he had something to do with building their synagogue. I don't know, I'd kind of feel nice about him if he built something.

(Luke 7:4) “When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored...”

That is to say, the Jewish leaders actually began to entreat, and they said to Jesus,

“... “He is worthy for You to grant this to him.””

That's bizarre that you'd actually have Jews saying that somebody else is worthy. So, he must have really done them a great favor.

(Luke 7:5) “for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue.”

(Luke 7:6) Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends...”

So, not only is the centurion well respected the community, but he's able to have relationships with a lot of friends. He sends those friends to Jesus to tell Him,

“... Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof;

(Luke 7:7) for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy...”

Now, the Jews have already said, “This is a worthy man,” but how does he see himself? Not worthy.

“... for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.”

(Luke 7:8) “For I also am a man placed under authority...”

Luke has given us a key. Why is he able to submit to the will of God? Because he doesn't see himself as being great. “And whatever You say, I know it will happen.” You know it's the arrogant who say, “I question God.” Who in the world are you talking to? You wouldn't stand in front of somebody that was over you and say, “I really question your veracity.” Not if you're in your right mind; not if you wanted your job.

“For this reason I did not even consider myself worthy...”

(Luke 7:8) “For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.””

“We're in a community where we're used to doing what people tell us to do. You just say it and it will happen because I believe that Your authority is great.” And that really is us coming to God, isn't it? With that sense of, “You say it. That's all I need to hear.”

Look at Jesus' response in the passage,

(Luke 7:9) “Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, “I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.””

He is actually describing within the passage where faith begins, and it really begins with a sense of one greater than you, you're coming before them and you're asking them for something. But you're also acknowledging that not only are they greater than you, but they know better than you, and you're submitting to that. This is a heart of humility. If in fact, this has not been fostered in your life, when the gospel comes, and it gives the command, “Believe.”

Once again, when the multitudes come to Jesus, what is it that God wants us to do? He goes, “Believe.” And what is

the commandment? Believe. "Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "I don't think I can do that." How many people have we shared the gospel with, and you go, "What you need to do is receive Jesus Christ and believe that God can save you. He'll take away your sins and you need to believe that He not only died for your sins, but He rose again." This is a command. It's not an option. Now, if you're used to taking commands, you'll have an easier go of this. If you're not, then you're going to go, "Well, I don't know. Seems too easy. Maybe He doesn't know what He's doing. Quite frankly, maybe I need to do something." And Scripture says, "Believe." The law is preparatory. It humbles the heart. It causes you to be receptive and it creates a humility. As in this particular scenario, a soldier was used to taking commands and giving commands. He knows what it's about. That's what faith is. "I believe this guy is in charge and He knows what He's talking about." Herod has a difficult time with it. The question in the passage is, which side are you on? I mean, are you with the people that are receptive or are you with the one that repulses? Interesting text.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You with bowed heads. You share with us in Your word things that we should be doing.

We've all read them. Some of them strike us wrong because they're so hard. "Besides, who are You to tell us what to do?" We realize that we lack the one great preparation to all of this, and that is a heart that's humble. Yet in Your graciousness, You will oftentimes bring in our lives a moment of humility, of humiliation. We begin to realize that maybe we're not all that we thought we were. Maybe we don't have the answers. Maybe, just maybe, we need a Savior.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, I'm asking you to examine your own heart. How do you receive the commands of God? As the word of God begins to speak to you, do you perceive it as optional? Are you turned off by it? Do you resist in some way or are you like the woman at the well that says, "This guy knows everything about me. I love this guy"? Do you embrace the exposure so that your sins could be washed away? You would think

everybody would want the good news. Only some received it.