

### III Advent

December 15, 2019

Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Luke's

Isaiah 35:1-10

He describes a 'highway', it shall be called the Holy Way

James 5:7-10

Be patient until the coming of the Lord.

Matthew 11:1-11

John from prison, to Jesus – 'Are you the one who is to come?'

John asked Jesus, "Are you the one?"

When John had not yet been born, he leaped for joy in the womb of his mother Elizabeth when she was visited by Mary— John had such a sharp awareness of who Jesus was. When Jesus presented himself to John at the River Jordan for baptism, John said to him, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" John said (John 1:29), 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.'

But now John is in prison. As he sits in his prison cell, he questions what he has seen of Jesus; no winnowing fork in his hand to separate the good from the bad, no unquenchable fire to punish the unrepentant. John sent a message to Jesus, asking, 'are you the one?'

Jesus didn't offer a yes/no answer, but gave a summary of his actions, actions that echo the prophecy of Isaiah. The blind see, the lame walk, the dead are alive again. Couldn't John see that?

John had his own idea of what the Christ, the anointed one, would be like. He expected a Messiah who would protect the righteous and punish the unrighteous. He saw Jesus eat with sinners, and assemble students rather than an army.

Instead of preaching hell-fire, Jesus preached grace.

Instead of punishing sinners, Jesus reached out to them.

Instead of building up a political kingdom, he preached about a heavenly kingdom.

John asked, 'Jesus, are you the one, or should we wait for another?'

Jesus wasn't the Messiah John the Baptist expected.

Is Jesus always the Savior you and I expect? Does he always meet our expectation?

At least in my case, the answer is 'no', not always.

I want my loved ones protected from illness or harm. (My nephew Will died two days ago),

I want this faith family to never have a misunderstanding,

I want my siblings and me to communicate regularly and often,

I want St Luke's to have huge success at every attempt in a new ministry.

But we all learn by life experience that things don't always go that way...

Jesus' response to John was that his success as the Son of God isn't measured by those things, but by;

our learning compassion, love, forgiveness, modeling faith to others

When you and I sign up to follow Jesus, we commit ourselves to 'preparing the way' for him in the world, but starting with preparing the way for him to live in our own hearts, and for him to be the driving force of our lives.

A piece of 'preparing the way' is to decide what we do when Jesus doesn't meet our expectations. What should that say to us about what we expect, versus what God intends? What does that say about our patience to see God's will make itself known in a different way than we want, or a different time than we want?

What does it say about the way we need to accept that sometimes God's answer is: 'no'?

John's question to Jesus, "Are you the one?" seems shocking to hear, from the prophet who was given the job to prepare the way for him. The teaching moment this offers us is to consider how well we understand who Jesus is, and how we use the experiences in our life of faith to learn better how to prepare the way in ourselves. I believe this journey is the purpose we were created for.

Amen.