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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Vindicating Wisdom Matt 11:7-19

Lesson Background and Introduction

Today's text explores the seemingly vast gulf between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ—and the variety of opinions surrounding them. Many loved them; many hated them. Yet loving or hating these two is very different from loving or hating carpeting or cushions, music or movies. Choosing to hate these two, even in their differences, is choosing to hate God's wisdom. If we think that the wisdom of God is bound to meet with universal acceptance, the New Testament tells us otherwise. The gospel has always been sharply divisive. Jesus inspired joyous faith from many but received powerful, even violent, opposition from others. God's wisdom appeals to some people as it addresses their deepest needs. But it repels others as it challenges their self-rule. For those expecting a kingdom to come with military and political power, Jesus seemed the opposite of God's true king. For those who expected God to bring an immediate end to injustice and suffering, Jesus' idea of God's kingdom seemed absurd. But for those with ears to hear and eyes to see, Jesus brings the fulfillment of every divine promise and the answer to every human need. That He was rejected comes as no surprise to us, for God's messengers have always been rejected by many. How do you deal with the tension of God's kingdom, which is both "now" and "yet to be"? Circumstances can prove discouraging at times, but trusting that Christ reigns now and will reign fully in the future can provide strength and encouragement to meet even the biggest challenges. Those included even the challenge of Herod's prison for John and the challenge of the cross for Jesus. In the strength we have in Christ, we witness the vindication of God's wisdom.

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Boldness - John the Baptist fulfilled his prophetic calling, presenting Jesus to the world. He spoke out against the adulterous marriage of King Herod and Herodias, and, sadly, his bold statements landed him in prison. During this time of suffering, John sent his disciples to make sure Jesus was the predicted Messiah and there was no need to look for another. Jesus told John's followers to tell him about the miracles being performed which conformed with the Old Testament prophecies.

Courage - After Jesus answered John's disciples' questions, He turned to the crowd and began to teach concerning the prophet's ministry. John had preached repentance—turning away from one's sinful behavior and turning toward God. John never backed down. He stood firm on the convictions given to him by God. He was nothing like a weak reed blowing in the wind. John courageously persisted even when the opposition pushed against him.

Faithfulness - Jesus spoke highly of John, the last of the prophets announcing His arrival. John had the privilege of not only saying He is coming, but that He is indeed here. God called John before his birth to fulfill this mission, and John faithfully and forcefully carried out his appointment. Those who repented were baptized, but the religious leaders turned a deaf ear to John's calls for repentance, even though, as Jesus said, John came as God's messenger in the spirit and power of the prophet Elijah.

Like Children - Like children, nothing seems to satisfy us. We don't like to follow the way of John the Baptist, who disciplined himself to the Lord and refrained from worldly pleasures. That's too restrictive. We don't like the way of Jesus either, who ate and drank with sinners. That's too "loose." John was accused of having a demon, and Jesus was accused of being a glutton and drunkard. Nothing pleases us. If we were wise, like John, we would seek to understand Jesus, His ministry, and the importance of the Gospel in our lives. We would not care about what society thinks about us following Jesus.

(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:
True wisdom begins and ends with God

POEM FOR THE WEEK:
No wisdom gained through
arduous quest Can set a sinner
free, But God in wisdom sent
His Son To die for you and me.
—D. De Haan

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:
For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God
(1 Cor 1:18 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", Oct 31, 2001)

Series: Many Faces of Wisdom

UNIT: Wisdom in the Gospels

NEXT WEEK

The Boy Jesus
(Ecc 3:1, 7; Luke 2:39-52)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Misguided Expectations (Matt 11:7-10)

Misguided expectations of appearance (7-8)

- Misguided because of regarding from a worldly view (2 Cor 5:16)
- Misguided because of not understanding a person's actions (Matt 12:33)
- Misguided because only considering external appearances (Gal 2:6)
- Misguided because of ethnicities (Col 3:11)
- Misguided because of honoring earthly status (James 2:3-5)

Misguided expectations of a prophet (9)

- Misguided because of not understanding the prophecy (Luke 1:76)
- Misguided because of fear of people believing John a prophet (Matt 14:5)
- Misguided because of not believing John was the fulfillment of Elijah (Matt 17:11-13)
- Misguided because of not believing John was giving authority from Heaven (Matt 21:24-27)

Misguided expectations of God's Word (10)

- Misguided by distorting God's word or using deception (2 Cor 4:2-5)
- Misguided by not having it revealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 3:4-5)
- Misguided because of not having it spiritually discerned (1 Cor 2:13-16)
- Misguided because of not being in unity of the faith (Eph 4:13)

John's Prophecy (Matt 11:11-15)

Prophecy of true greatness (11)

- Greatness is all about obedience (Matt 5:19)
- Greatness is about being a servant (Matthew 23:11-12)
- Greatness is not about favoritism (James 2:1-4)
- Greatness is when God elevates us (Eph 1:3)

Prophecy of violence (12-13)

- Violence of the wicked (Ps 7:9)
- Violence that recoils (Ps 7:16)
- Violence through refusing to do what is right (Prov 21:7)
- Violence plotted in the heart (Prov 24:1-2)

Prophecy of spiritual insight (14-15)

- Insight based on the knowledge given by God (Phil 1:9-10)
- Insight to know and prove what is good and acceptable to God (Rom 12:2)
- Insight to distinguish good from evil (Heb 5:14)
- Insight provided by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:13-16)

Wisdom Justified (Matt 11:16-19)

Wisdom justified by obedience (16-17)

- Obedience to show faith (Gen 22:9-12)
- Obedience to witness (Acts 8:26-31)
- Obedience regardless of prejudice (Acts 10:19-23)
- Obedience to follow Jesus (Matt 9:9)

Wisdom justified by understanding (18)

- Understanding that opens the mind to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45)
- Understanding that exposes Satan and leads to sanctification (Acts 26:18)
- Understanding of the glory of God (2 Cor 4:6)
- Understanding that allows knowing God better (Eph 1:17-18)

Wisdom justified by works (19)

- Good works so that others will praise God (Matt 5:16)
- Good works as a good example to others (Titus 2:7-8)
- Good works is living a holy life (Eph 2:10)
- Good works are those that help others (Heb 6:10)