

A Reckoning Forever – Sermon
Matthew 3:13-17
01/08/2023

They know He is the Christ, but they abandon Him when He does what the Christ is supposed to do.

Our season of Epiphany kicks off with the Arrival of the Magi on Friday, and the Baptism of our Lord today.

Everything is out of sorts for the people of God because this humble Messiah is nothing like they expected and clearly not doing what they expected him to do.

First, the Magi looked in the wrong place, after all a King should be in Jerusalem, and yet they did not find Him there, rather the Star led them to Jesus with His humble mother Mary.

So, they bestowed upon Him gifts befitting a King.

Just look at the gifts brought by the Magi: Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh.

But where was His throne, where was His crown, where was His court?
Why wasn't He surrounded with treasure already and honored in Jerusalem?

Even the Magi didn't seem to totally understand their circumstances because they had to be warned in a dream by God to depart and avoid the *other* King Herod.
(Matthew 2:1-12)

This was not the first misunderstanding of Christ, and it would not be the last.

The saying goes "Many have tried and failed."

I love, *and* hate; this phrase all at the same time.

I love it...when I fail. Because it comforts me with the knowledge that I am not alone in my efforts; for many have tried and failed just like I did. So now I know to reflect on what I can learn and how that could lead to success in the future.

I have my mistakes and the mistakes of many others to learn from as a primer on perseverance.

But I hate it when failure is the be all and end all. When you had such high hopes of being distinguished from the crowd and then you are brought crashing back down to earth, humbled yet again; because you're just like everyone else that tried and failed.
It can be despairing, depressing, and defeating all at once.

We see example after example after example of just that in scripture.

Adam and Eve thought they could be like God and found out there is no such relationship with the one true God.

Ahab and Jezebel thought they could ignore the One True God and create a whole new church to worship Baal and get better results for Israel as a country.

Instead, they found that only met with the death of their false priests and, ultimately, their death.
(1 Kings 18-22, 2 Kings 9)

And everyone knows about Jonah! How he fled to Tarshish via Joppa, so he didn't have to go to Nineveh to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins for the awful Ninevites! Three days and nights in the belly of a great fish was his reward for avoiding the Lord!

I'll take the all-expense paid trip to Nineveh instead of that any day.

Or would I?

I mean if I'm honest, I'm not much different than the people of God's Day that tried and failed.

Like the Magi We come to our King with gifts befitting a King, but we forget that He is not only served and honored in this sanctuary, but He is also honored and served in the hospitals, in our neighborhoods, and even in the prisons.

We think we know better than God, that His Word is irrelevant and say things like, "I know what God says but I have to live in the real world."
And like Adam and Eve we become God's to ourselves.

Like Ahab and Jezebel, we trust church consultants, we reinvent our church every couple of years thinking this will really work better than what we did before, and we forget to consult God in prayer, devotion, and reverence to what He's always been in our lives.

And just like Jonah, we run from our opportunities to share Christ with our neighbor for the forgiveness of sins and the redemption of their souls, because that's really pastor's job and I'm afraid I won't do it right, or I just don't love my neighbor enough to even try.

But even if we get all that right. Even if we are disciplined in our devotion, love for our neighbor, and humble ourselves. We're almost always like John in our Lesson today.

We simply don't want to let Jesus do what He is supposed to.

It's kind of like friends I had back in my High School Days.

I don't see it as much with kids these days, but that may be because I simply don't interact with High School kids anymore other than in passing and greeting in Church, but what I hear from Mike is that this does still happen.

It would go something like this. A classmate would ask another classmate a question, listen, and then immediately disagree with the answer getting the follow up response, "Well, why'd ya ask me in the first place!!!"

That may even be an adult thing too, but you get the point.

We turn to someone who we think might know, but then we disagree with them when we don't get *the answer we want*.

That is Jesus and John today!

John is earnestly in error, so, Jesus makes it clear...He is God, this is proper, for the purpose of honoring all things God commanded, that people did not do properly so Christ would accomplish it perfectly, and thereby give His perfection to us through faith.

Later in Lent on Maundy Thursday Peter will be earnestly in error as well. John 13:1-10a says, "It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸ "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." ⁹ "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" ¹⁰ Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean."

Peter meant well but meaning well can still be entirely wrong when we don't let Jesus do, what He is supposed to do.

In our lesson today His Father in Heaven literally says, "This one is my Son, my beloved one, in whom I reckon well"

That is a powerful word in our text today. Unfortunately, the translators of the ESV today chose a more common rendering that potentially misses the point entirely.

Here God the Father has pointed out not only is He pleased with His son, but He is also pleased with what His Son has done and will do.

Every day when people despair around me about how anti-church the world is becoming, I comfort them with these words, “I can assure you a reckoning is coming”

It's a nautical term for course correcting the ship.

Navigators, as far back as 1275 AD, had the technology to chart the course of a ship to make sure that it was on course, had it veered too far off course, to reach the intended destination.

Indeed, the people of God had veered to far a field to even begin to be considered saved, so Jesus came and reckoned the way to eternal life through Him.

Jesus' Cross, raised in Jerusalem, is the throne He never sat on; that reckoned the world that had no clue how to course correct themselves.

Furthermore, a reckoning is still coming to people just like you and me that just can't get it right eternally.

A reckoning through the vows of our Baptism made us sons and daughters where we were formally orphans.

A reckoning through Holy Communion where Christ comes to us, in with and under the bread and wine to forgive our sins, strengthen our Faith, and give us eternal living again.

A reckoning through brothers and sisters who support us and help us to live Godly lives together for Him.

A reckoning for everyone who hears the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who was born of a virgin, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and buried, and rose from the dead, now seated at the right Hand of the Father, and present where two or more are gathered in His name.

And this reckoning would reckon their bodies and souls and put them on the path to eternal living.

A reckoning forever!

AMEN

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