

LUKE 7:24-35

ARE YOU SATISFIED?

“When John’s messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings’ courts. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written,

““Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.”

“I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.’ (When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)

“To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another,

““We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.”

“For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by all her children.”¹

“**I** know the secret of people who come to church, year in and year out, and they are never dissatisfied with what happens at the church. They like the preacher ‘enough,’ they’re generally satisfied with the programs of the church, and you’ll never hear any griping coming from them. They don’t require much of the church. That’s it. That’s their secret.”² Joe McKeever hit the bullseye with that observation. These are his notes hastily jotted down in a worship service when that revelation came to him. **“Key to surviving the upheavals in the modern church is to need less and less from your church. That way, no matter what happens you will never be disappointed. Will never be hurt. Will never be offended.”**

People such as just described go to church, sit through the service, perhaps they connect with what’s going on down front or perhaps not; however, they don’t expect much. They don’t require anything from the service or the pastor; therefore, they never leave with an empty tank or a dissatisfied spirit. They’re just putting in time, just checking it off. They will be quick to say, “We go to church every Sunday.”

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² Joe McKeever, “How to be satisfied with your church no matter what,” February 1, 2018, <http://joemckeever.com/wp/how-to-be-satisfied-with-your-church-no-matter-what/#more-15654>, accessed 7 February 2018

Not requiring much means not expecting much. If we expect little and that's what we get, we're never disappointed. Church members such as these are never disappointed. They are not people you would want to build a church on; but they won't fight you. They won't tear a church apart because they didn't get what they wanted; in fact, they are perfectly satisfied.

"What did you go out to see?" Three times it is recorded that Jesus asked those crowded about Him what they were seeking when they went out to hear John the Baptist. Perhaps He could be asking that of people attending a church service today, "What are you looking for?" Perhaps Jesus could ask of each of us in attendance this day, "What do you expect to see?"

On another occasion, a blind man who sat beside the road where he could beg as people passed by, heard the noise of the crowd following Jesus as He walked by. That blind man repeatedly cried out until Jesus commanded that the man be brought before Him. When the blind man was at last in front of the Master, Jesus asked, "What do you want Me to do for you" [LUKE 18:41]? Again, it would be appropriate to ask people attending church services today, "What do you want?" It would be good to ask, "What do you think Jesus can do for you?" We attend the services with expectations; we come seeking something. Do we know what we want?

The message is meant to challenge each one sharing the services to clarify why they have come to the House of God. Why are you here today? What do you expect from the Lord Jesus? All about us are people who have needs—great needs. Do we serve a God who is unable to meet our needs? Is it true, as we aver, that Jesus is able to meet the needs of all who come to Him? When we come to the House of God, we hear the preacher proclaim a message from the Word of God; it is fair to ask if this is the Word of life. Why do you come to a given church service? Why have you come to this particular service today? What do you expect to find here among the people of God? This is the question for this day. May God guide us as we endeavour to find His answer.

WHAT DID YOU GO OUT INTO THE WILDERNESS TO SEE? A REED SHAKEN BY THE WIND?

What did you hope to see at the services of your church? Were you expecting to see a preacher who would tremble at the opposition thrown up by the world? Were you hoping to see a preacher who changed positions as often as a reed quavers in the winds of the Jordan? Did you actually imagine that the preacher would vacillate? What were you looking for?

Let's be honest, too many of God's professed people want a preacher who will make them feel good about themselves, feel good about how they are living, feel good about the choices they are making however self-serving those choices happen to be. These dear souls are comfortable with their church. In fact, it is fair to say that they are never dissatisfied. The preacher doesn't make them uncomfortable, doesn't challenge them, doesn't cause any distress.

Jesus challenged the people who were following Him. They had heard John's messengers. It would be beneficial to remember how this meeting came about. Jesus had come into Capernaum. Capernaum had become the city from which He worked. Here, He could retire for rest and refreshment before going out into the countryside once more. Here, He could devote time to instructing His disciples. On this particular occasion, a centurion approached Jesus. This centurion had a servant whom he highly valued. The servant was sick, so sick that he could die momentarily. Apparently, there was nothing the doctors could do to stave off death. So, in desperation, the centurion heard about Jesus and sent some of the elders of the Jews. He was able to dispatch these elders because He had shown them kindness, favouring them and showing them consideration in their religious efforts.

These Jewish elders were asking Jesus to come, pointing out that the centurion truly favoured their nation by using his own wealth to build the synagogue where they met for worship. As Jesus was responding to this, the centurion must have become concerned that he was brash, overly forward with Jesus, because he now sent some friends to say to the Master, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Therefore, I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it” [LUKE 7:6-8].

Jesus did heal the servant, and from a distance! The Master used this as a teachable moment, saying to those who were following Him, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith” [LUKE 7:9]. Until this moment, the people had never witnessed Jesus doing “distance healing.” You understand the significance of this event is to encourage us that Jesus hears and heals, even from Heaven. Crying out to the Master moves His heart, and when we cry out in faith, He delights to respond to our request.

Shortly after this event, Jesus went to a town called Nain. As was always the case, a massive crowd was with Him. Perhaps some were part of a Pharisaical “truth squad,” many were potential disciples on the fringe of faith, others were there because ... well, because they were there. Of course, His own disciples, those who had committed themselves to Him, were with Him. They were there because He was still instructing them.

As they neared the town, they encountered a funeral cortege. The body of a young man, an only son, was being borne to his tomb. Compounding her grief at the loss of her only son was the widowed mother’s uncertain future. Her grief was genuine, and it was intense. Doctor Luke writes, “When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep’” [LUKE 7:13]. The Lord, as is always true, was moved with compassion. His great heart was touched by her grief; it was as though the intensity of her anguish, the pain of parting, was somehow poured into His own soul.

Jesus did an unusual thing—He walked up to the bier to touch it. The young man would have been already wrapped in grave clothes and laid on the platform so that those who would carry him to his final resting place could carry him without touching the body. I don’t know what people thought when this stranger walked right up to the bier and touched it. Jesus didn’t say anything; He just touched the bier. Those carrying it stopped, no doubt wondering what was happening. The mother said nothing, so astonished she couldn’t speak. Why would a stranger interrupt her mourning?

What happened next was more than anyone, least of all, that mother, could expect. Jesus said, “Young man, I say to you, arise” [LUKE 7:14b]. The young man sat up and began to speak. We don’t know what his first words were. Maybe he said, “Hey! Unwrap me!” Maybe he began to speak of what he had seen in those hours following his death. I suspect that more than anything else, he spoke to his mother. “Mom, why are you crying?” I do appreciate Luke’s careful observation that “Jesus gave him to his mother” [LUKE 7:15b]. Jesus not only raised the boy to life, but He was moved with compassion by the mother’s grief.

You can imagine the impact of this singular event on all those who witnessed what happened. “Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, ‘A great prophet has arisen among us!’ and ‘God has visited his people’” [LUKE 7:16]! You can be sure that this was the focus of a lot of the conversations that were carried out for the coming weeks. In fact, Jesus was the centre of many conversations after that. In the Gospel he wrote, Doctor Luke observes, “This report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country” [LUKE 7:17].

As could be expected, word of Jesus' miraculous work reached even into Herod's prison cells. John, known as "The Baptist," was incarcerated in one of those cells. Some of John's followers heard of this, perhaps they had even been present on that day when Jesus raised that young man to life; in any case, they told John what had happened. John had perhaps become discouraged in prison, wondering what his life meant. He knew God had prepared him even before his birth to announce the presence of the Messiah. Now, he was imprisoned; it didn't look as if he would be released any time soon. Could he have been wrong about who he was, and even more important, could it be possible that he had misidentified the Messiah? He only had one shot at getting this announcement right; had he bungled his one divine assignment?

Concerned about what he perceived as a possibly serious error, John sent two of his followers to ask the Master, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another" [LUKE 7:19]? These men faithfully conveyed the question to Jesus. The Lord's response was to quietly go about what He always did. The Word of God says, "In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight" [LUKE 7:21]. Having done this, Jesus at last responded to the question John had asked. "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me" [LUKE 7:22, 23].

Jesus pointed to His power as evidence that He was the Messiah. It was enough to satisfy John's messengers. His power should be enough to satisfy us. Did He save you? That should be enough to give you confidence to praise His Name. Has He delivered you from sin? That should be enough to demonstrate that He is the Christ, just as He said. Does He give you peace? Does He comfort you in your distress? Is He a friend who sticks closer than a brother? You should be confident in Him and willingly give Him praise as the One who delivers your soul. "Blessed is the one who is not offended by me," says the Master. It was a challenge to John to stay the course; and it is a challenge to each of us to stay the course. Don't quit serving because you passed through a rough stretch. Don't allow yourself to become discouraged because things seem dark to you. The One who saved you and Who has stood with you, is still on the throne.

The exchange between Jesus and the messengers John had sent was conducted openly; the people who crowded around Jesus heard the exchange and knew of John's struggle in a time of deep distress. Make no mistake, to be incarcerated in Herod's prison would be a trial. To be there knowing that Herodias, Herod's wife, hated him would only magnify John's stress. John would shortly lose his life when Herodias' daughter had performed a salacious dance for her step-father before demanding that the head of the Baptist be brought on a platter.

There is a truth that must be emphasised. When we struggle with questions, when we wonder about the validity of our commitment to the Master, our struggles are never really hidden from the intense gaze of others. People scrutinise our lives; they know when we are struggling, even though we try to keep our doubts secret. I want to encourage you to know that there is a significant value in being open, in living a life that is unobscured. When God has at last allayed our fears, when the Master has given us peace again, we will glorify His Name. The very fact that we pass through times of questioning God and His mercy means that when we come out on the other side, God receives the glory. God will bring us through. Though the flood rages, though the fire flares up brightly, though the winds howl, hold on to the Master's hand, knowing that He will bring you through the storm and through the trial. John's messengers would return to him with evidence of Jesus' power and Person. Just so, when you have worked through the questions raised in your own heart, others will see the power of Christ at work in you.

Peter would later write, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And

‘If the righteous is scarcely saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’”

[1 PETER 4:12-18]

I think I feel a shout coming on. God directs the steps of His child, and even the trials that assail his faith are permitted by a God too good to needlessly hurt His child and too wise to make a mistake. Amen?

WHAT THEN DID YOU GO OUT TO SEE? A MAN DRESSED IN SOFT CLOTHING? What did you hope to see at church? Perhaps you were expecting to see and hear someone who commended success as this dying world counts success? Is it possible that you were looking for a man who dressed for success? Perhaps you were looking for someone who would preach about wealth as though accumulating the things of this world is the most important activity you will ever perform? Were you hoping that you could be made to feel good about living for the moment instead of living for eternity? What did you expect to find at church?

It is a great tragedy that many of the professed people of God will judge whether a church is worthy of their presence by how successful the church appears in their eyes. Who attends the services is more important than whether God is present. It is of no particular consequence if the theology of the congregation is like the Pecos River at floodtide—a half-mile wide and ankle deep. What matters are padded pews, stained glass windows, a soaring spire and the latest technical equipment to ensure a pleasant experience for the “worshipper.” What matters is whether the beautiful people approve of that congregation. You see, we import the world’s concept of success into the life of the Body of Christ. What is worse, we do this unconsciously!

Let me say very clearly—an individual may be highly successful in the estimate of this dying world, and yet be a failure in the realm of the divine. Success as an entertainer, as a business person, as a physician, as a computer wizard, means nothing in the realm of the spiritual. It is of no consequence how much you have accumulated, what matters is the number of lives you have blessed. It means nothing to speak of the size of your bank account, what matters is the size of your heart.

I am always amazed at the Apostle’s cautionary statement to the Ephesian elders when they were gathered at Melitus. You will remember that Paul admonished those men, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears” [ACTS 20:28-31].

Let's unpack what the Apostle said in this warning. Paul foresaw evil men insinuating themselves into the churches. He spoke of these invaders as "fierce wolves." In speaking thusly, the Apostle pointed out that their character is lupine, wolf-like, ferocious, rapacious, predatory. They will be fierce. The word translated "fierce," [*barús*] is often translated "weighty" or "honourable." The Apostle seems to have been warning that these invaders would have every appearance of honour, they project an aura of scholarship; and this outward appearance of authenticity would make them all the more dangerous. These fierce wolves could be readily accepted as legitimate spokesmen of the Living God. In fact, they will arise from within the churches, likely having gone to all the right schools and having the recommendations of the best people so that their credentials are superior in every respect.

Jude, the half-brother of our Lord, appears to have seen such men insinuating themselves into the churches quite early in the history of the Faith. He prophesied, "Certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" [JUDE 4]. What Paul warned of was already at work among the churches even in that early day. Satan, the great imitator, has his people whom he insinuates into the churches. Gifted with twenty-twenty hindsight, I believe we have witnessed precisely such wicked people attempt to insinuate themselves into the life of this congregation. God has graciously protected us.

Paul had witnessed this same invasion early in his service before the Lord. He wrote in the Second Letter to the Saints of God in Corinth, "What I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So, it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds" [2 CORINTHIANS 11:12-15].

When Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders, he could have pointed back to just such a person as he had in mind. Amos had travelled from Judah to Israel with a stern message calling for repentance, warning that if the people did not repent, God would judge them. He was not polished. His clothing carried the ripe aroma of sheep manure; his hands were rough, stained with the juice of figs that he nipped to force them to ripen. He called the women of Israel "Cows." He condemned the king as ungodly. He condemned the worship in which the people delighted as a sham, a mere show without any heart. The religion endeavoured to make the people feel good about themselves without any living relationship to the LORD God. Throughout the land were those who professed to worship, whinging, "We work hard all week; we don't want to hear that we are sinners on the Lord's Day. Affirm us; make us feel good about ourselves. Tell us that we are good people." Though he pleaded with God to be merciful to the land, he was unsparing in his condemnation.

Amos' message stirred up controversy. At last, the Priest of Bethel was moved to what he must have considered a distasteful task. This pulpit dandy sent a letter to the king, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said,

"Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land."

[AMOS 7:10-11]

The contrast in these two men could not have been more distinct, more dramatic. Amos' skin was leathery, tanned, darkened from days spent toiling under the Judean sun. Amaziah's skin was no doubt light, untanned and soft. Amos wore the garments of a herdsman, the simple, homespun dress of a shepherd. Amaziah was resplendent in ornate robes and wearing a mitre on his head. The pungent smell of the sheep and the fig trees wafted from Amos whenever he entered the room; this odour would be mingled with the muted aroma of the fresh grass and the earth on which he rested while tending his flocks. Amaziah no doubt was redolent with the fragrance of incense. The contrast in bouquets could not have been more distinct. The difference in their appearance and even their presence must have been dramatic.

The court preacher confronted the roughhewn prophet of God, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom" [AMOS 7:12-13]. "Go home. You don't belong here. Your training is inferior, as evident even from your dress and your speech. Don't bother coming back."

The man of God responded, "I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. But the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' Now therefore hear the word of the LORD.

"You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel,
and do not preach against the house of Isaac.'

"Therefore, thus says the LORD:

"Your wife shall be a prostitute in the city,
and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword,
and your land shall be divided up with a measuring line;
you yourself shall die in an unclean land,
and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land."

[AMOS 7:14-17]

Tragically, many of those who are identified as "princes of the pulpit" would be better identified as dandies, or as fops. Being accepted by the elites is of greater importance to them than is truthful proclamation of God's call to repentance. The American frontier produced some great men of character. Among them was the Methodist evangelist, Peter Cartwright. On one occasion, Mr. Cartwright was to speak at a church in Nashville. As he stood to speak, the pastor of that congregation tugged at his coattails to say, "General Jackson just entered the church."

Momentarily distracted by this interruption, Cartwright recovered and said, "I understand that General Andrew Jackson is here this morning. I have been instructed to be guarded in my remarks. Let me say this: Andrew Jackson will go to hell if he doesn't repent of his sin!" There was a collective gasp from the shocked congregation at this bold statement.

After the service, people wondered how the General would respond to the preacher. Jackson was known for harbouring grudges toward those who offended him. When Jackson met the preacher in the street the following day, he grasped his hand, looked him in the eye and said, "Sir, if I had a regiment of men like you, I could conquer the world!" We need more such men of courage in the pulpits of our land, rather than "princes" who are fearful of offending anyone.

We must remember that Jesus sought out the outcasts of society. The elite of that ancient society were offended in Jesus because of those He associated with. We read, “The Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, ‘Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ And Jesus answered them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick’” [LUKE 5:30-31].

Consequently, the early churches were not populated with the elite of society. Paul challenged the Corinthian Christians to take a hard look at who they were. He wrote, “Consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord’” [1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-31].

We should be greatly concerned whenever we witness a congregation to which the elite of society has attached itself. I seem to recall the Master warning, “Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets” [LUKE 6:26]. That doesn’t exactly sound like the commendation a church should seek!

WHAT THEN DID YOU GO OUT TO SEE? A PROPHET? What were you expecting to find in church? Did you expect to hear a Word from God? Were you expecting that the Lord would commend you because you are neither hot or cold? Because you are lukewarm? Eternity has invaded time, and you are given opportunity to prepare for life without restrictions. Is that what you are seeking? Or are you hoping to live with one foot in the present and the other in eternity?

Preaching is meant to be prophetic. I would wish that every preacher was prophetic in the messages presented. By prophetic, I mean that the man of God is responsible to declare the mind of God to mankind and petition God on behalf of mankind. The preacher is appointed to be a prophet. What do you expect from the preacher when you go to church? What do you expect to hear? The man who declares his opinion without revealing the mind of God is clearly one-dimensional. The man who adheres to the message of the denomination and even the message approved by the church is perhaps two-dimensional. However, that one who reveals the mind of God, who speaks with a clear message that declares, “Thus saith the Lord,” is multi-dimensional. He brings his listeners into the secret counsel of the Living God.

A recent study reveals that the number of people in the U.S. who identify as Christians is shrinking. It seems that every few years, new data shows a continuing decline of Americans who identify as Christians and a concomitant rise in those who identify as religiously unaffiliated (called “nones”).

Brett McCracken quotes Ed Stetzer as saying, “Christianity isn’t collapsing; it’s being clarified.”³ Stetzer wrote his assessment in 2015 following the release of Pew Research data showing the Christian share of the American population declined almost eight percentage points from 2007 to 2014. In that article, he pointed out that the surge in “nones” is because nominal Christians are giving up the pretense of faith while convictional Christians remain committed.

³ Ed Stetzer, cited by Bret McCracken, “The Dying Away of Cultural Christianity,” Church Leaders, April 25, 2018, https://churchleaders.com/outreach-missions/outreach-missions-articles/324384-the-dying-away-of-cultural-christianity-brett-mccracken.html?utm_source=outreach-cl-daily-nl&utm_medium=email&utm_content=text-link&utm_campaign=cl-daily-nl&maropost_id=&mpweb=256-6816018-742210145, accessed 7 May 2018

McCracken observed that throughout most of U.S. history, to be American was to be “Christian.” “National identity was conflated with religious identity in a way that produced a distorted form of Christianity, mostly about family values, Golden Rule moralism and good citizenship. The God of this ‘Christianity’ was first and foremost a nice guy who rewarded moral living by sanctifying the American dream: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (i.e., a substantial 401(k), a three-car garage and as many Instagram followers as possible). This form of Christianity ... has been aptly labeled “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism,” a faith defined by a distant, ‘cosmic ATM’ God who only cares that we are nice to one another and feel good about ourselves.”⁴ Tragically, McCracken’s observation applies equally to Canada.

The god of modern church life is closer to being Santa Claus than being the Living God of Scripture. We have witnessed among the churches a transformation from a Faith that calls people to believe in the miracle-working, supernatural God revealed in the Word into a mere religion consumed with rites and rituals. What we witness among the professed churches of this day is “a Christianity-flavoured morality,”⁵ as McCracken observes. The Faith of Christ the Lord has been reduced to a convenient, comfortable system meant only to lift up the human spirit. However, this modern religion fails the biblical test of disruptive demands placed on polite society. The early followers of the Saviour were accused of turning the world upside down [see **ACTS 17:6**]. Such a charge against Christians seems impossible today. Jesus calls people to a life utterly committed to Him. Prophetic preaching that reflects the Saviour still calls people to life that is not swayed by calls to relax and to be lulled into complacency. You cannot read the demands of Jesus and imagine modern Christianity.

Jesus challenged, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” [**MATTHEW 10:34-39**].

I opened this message by referring to an article written by Joe McKeever, a favoured writer for me. Brother McKeever concluded the article that stimulated my thoughts on this message with some personal thoughts.⁶ He notes that it must surely be appropriate for God’s people to ask upon entering the house of worship, “Why am I here?” It is important that I point out that the question is not, nor should it ever be, “What do I expect to get out of this today?” What you expect to receive is immaterial to honouring God. In fact, that particular question betrays a self-centred approach to worship, to say nothing of our approach to prayer or service. That question has no place in worship of the Risen Son of God.

A follower of the Christ should ask himself or herself questions upon coming to the House of God. The one who follows the Risen Lord of Glory should ask, “What do I expect to happen here?” That child of the King should clarify for herself, “What do I want to happen?” Asking and answering this will assist in making oneself ready for worship. Having asked what is expected and what the worshipper wants to happen, it is time to ask, “What would God have happen today?” The worshipper is turning the event over to the direction of the Lord God, confessing that she is waiting on Him to take control of the act.

⁴ McCracken, *ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ McKeever, *op. cit.*

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Here are some other questions worthy of anyone who would honour the Master. “What does the Lord want to do in me today?” “How does God want to use me today?” Asking the right questions will influence how we worship, to say nothing of influencing how we pray and even what we expect from being present in the House of the Living God. In short, asking the right question is the first step in receiving the right answer.

I am convinced that it is appropriate for us to leave church disappointed on occasion. If we came to worship, and we were treated to an hour of comedy and entertainment, most of us would be disappointed—at least, I hope that we would be disappointed. If we were promised a Bible study meant to feed our hungry hearts and to strengthen us as disciples of the Son of God, but instead we received something shallow, some series of silly, meaningless stories, a waste of time that consisted only of warmed-over platitudes, disappointment would certainly be in order.

What we do with our disappointment is another story. In most cases, we would not want to tell the pastor or our favorite deacon. If we will honour the Master, we should tell Him. Disappointment should drive our prayers for the pastor and church leadership, as well as for ourselves.

All of this begs the question—Why do you go to church? What do you expect from your time of worship? From the song service and the sermon? From the interaction with other members? From the entire church experience? Do you worship with your offering? Do you truly pray? Are you transformed in some way when you leave? Do you understand what our Lord meant when He said Mary had chosen “that good portion, which will not be taken away from her” [LUKE 10:42b], referring to her worship at His feet?

So, on Sunday as you prepare to go to church, ask, “What are you looking for?” It’s a good question to think about. Our Master asked something similar of the multitudes who had gone out to hear the preaching of John the Baptist.

“What did you go out into the wilderness to see?”

“What then did you go out to see?”

“What then did you go out to see?”

Amen.