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## THE AUTHENTIC JESUS | SCANDALIZER (2)

January 15, 2023

Matthew 11:2-6

### PURPOSE

To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst  
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships  
To participate in God's mission to the world

### ICE BREAKER QUESTION

10 MIN

What is the story behind the time you went the longest without sleep?

### WORSHIP

10 MIN

#### OPENING PRAYER

O God, turn and be gracious to us, for the road is long and we are weary. We feel beaten down by the trials of life and need your strength to sustain us. Show us your favor, and offer us your blessing, that we may abide in faithfulness and not be put to shame. Comfort us, O God, and revive our souls. Grant us the endurance to take up our cross, and follow the difficult roads in life. Amen.

#### RESPONSIVE PRAYER—Psalm 29:1-11

##### A Psalm of David

<sup>1</sup>Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

<sup>2</sup>**Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.**

<sup>3</sup>The voice of the LORD is over the waters;  
the God of glory thunders,  
the LORD, over many waters.

<sup>4</sup>**The voice of the LORD is powerful;  
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.**

<sup>5</sup>The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;  
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

<sup>6</sup>**He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf,  
and Sirion like a young wild ox.**

<sup>7</sup>The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.

<sup>8</sup>**The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;  
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.**

<sup>9</sup> The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth  
and strips the forests bare,  
and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

<sup>10</sup>**The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;  
the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.**

<sup>11</sup>May the LORD give strength to his people!  
May the LORD bless his people with peace!

**SCRIPTURE  
READING**

<sup>2</sup>Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup>and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” <sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup>the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. <sup>6</sup>And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

**BIBLE STUDY**    **Summary and Connection**

40 MIN

For the past two weeks, we have been learning about the identity and character of Jesus in a sermon series aptly titled—*The Authentic Jesus*. In his first sermon, Jason addressed how one way or another the name of Jesus tends to provoke a strong reaction. Why is the name of Jesus deeply offensive to people, particularly in a city like New York? Why does the very name of Jesus Christ scandalize people?

In today’s passage we explore how the scandalizing nature of Jesus is not just a modern problem, but in fact, even John the Baptist—the one who proclaimed the arrival of Jesus as the forerunner—was scandalized by Jesus.

In this passage we learn that John is in prison. John was imprisoned precisely because of his message proclaiming the arrival of the Messiah and the impending judgment. John’s prophetic message had sparked a revival, resulting in his imprisonment. While in prison John hears about the works of the Christ (Messiah) whose name and arrival he had proclaimed. John has a problem—he is imprisoned for proclaiming the name of the Messiah. He is aware of his impending death, and he is perplexed by the works of Jesus. John, in other words, is scandalized by Jesus. Thus, he sends his disciples to ascertain the identity of the Messiah. John asks an important question to Jesus—“Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”

John’s question is important as it reveals to us the true identity of Jesus. If Jesus is not the One, then he is nothing more than an enlightened moral teacher. However, if he is truly the One—the Messiah, then no matter what he asks of us—no matter how sacrificial—it wouldn’t compare with what we discover in knowing and being known by the Savior himself. John receives a remarkable promise and assurance from Jesus. Jesus points John’s disciples to his words and works—his astonishing claims, and miraculous healings—both of which reveal the arrival of the kingdom of God, and the restorative power of the gospel. Jesus’ message to John was perplexing, yet profound: Blessed is the one who is not offended by the name of Jesus—only the ones who receive Jesus as he is can experience the rich favor of his presence and acceptance.

**1. Looking at the Bible**

What does the text say? What according to you is the theme of this passage?

- Why was John in prison? What can we learn about John’s character and condition from his question to Jesus?
- In verse 3 we read about John’s question: “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” How is John’s question the right question, and how does John’s question reveal the authentic nature of Jesus?
- In verse 4 and 5 we read about Jesus’ response to John’s question. What can we learn about the identity of Jesus from these verses?

## 2. Looking at Jesus

At Central we believe that all of Scripture points to Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the theological center of the Bible. Every passage not only points to Jesus, but the grand narrative of the Bible also finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus.

- John's question to Jesus reveals the condition of his heart—John was deeply offended by Jesus. What were the reasons behind John's offense?
- Jesus' response reveals to us the nature of his heart—what can we learn about Jesus from his response to John?

## 3. Looking at Our Hearts

- In this passage we learn that even the ones who believe in Jesus are offended by the name of Jesus. Discuss the ways in which we, as modern day Christians, are offended by the name of Jesus?
- John's predicament in this passage has contemporary relevance—we struggle to accept Jesus as he is, and struggle to commit to Jesus for who he is. We all have the tendency to create and follow a Jesus of our own imagination. Have you ever struggled with this? If yes, how?
- Why is it vital for us to know and follow the authentic Jesus, and not the Jesus of our own imagination? How can we know whether or not we are following the authentic Jesus?

## 4. Looking at Our World

- How is this passage hopeful for us as Christians living in a postmodern culture that demands authenticity, and yet is readily scandalized by the name of Jesus?

**SHARING** 15 MIN Share your prayer requests, thoughts, hopes and fears for the coming week, and as you do consider how this passage might give light to what you are sharing.

**KINGDOM PRAYER** 15 MIN Pray that we would see ourselves called by God. Include other prayer requests.

**SENDING** 5 MIN God's word is a lamp to our feet.  
Christ's teachings are a light to our path.  
May God's word take root in our lives.  
May Christ's love nourish and sustain us.  
Amen.