

ARE YOU THE ONE?

Slayden Yarbrough
First Baptist Church, Boulder, CO
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Text: Luke 7: 18-20; 22-23

Introduction: A number of years ago there was a record that hit the pop charts entitled, “You’re Still the One.” The catchy phrase and tune was picked up by one of the major television networks as a promotion theme for their programs in which it was proclaimed that, “We’re still the one.” The idea was that if you wanted comedy, drama, sports, news, whatever, you could find it in this network’s shows.

- A. During the Christmas season we are reminded of the person and the purpose of Christ time and time again. Somehow it seems that we in the church are trying to say to the world about us that Jesus is the one.
- B. In fact, we start with the assumption that Jesus is the answer to all the questions that we might ask, or the solution to all of the problems that we might encounter.
- C. Often we are not very clear concerning our questions and problems, yet we approach whatever may come our way with a confidence in Christ.
- D. Today I would like to propose that the Christmas season is an appropriate time to ask a very honest question, “Is Jesus the one?” I would like for us to address this question from three different perspectives.
 - 1. First, what can we learn from the New Testament and those who encountered Jesus concerning their attitudes toward Him and His relevance for their lives?
 - 2. Second, how can we answer this question in terms of our own needs and existence? (It’s a personal question – “Is Jesus the One for me and my life?”)
 - 3. And third, how can we convey to the world about us a valid testimony to the relevance of Jesus for the lives of those people that we are confronted with daily? (“Is Jesus the One for all of mankind?” And, if so, what role do we have in communicating this?)
- I. The New Testament and the People who encountered Jesus
 - A. The New Testament contains numerous incidents where persons seemed to be asking the question concerning the identity of Jesus, or responding to the idea that He was the one that they had been seeking. Allow me to give you several examples.
 - B. John the Baptist
 - 1. The lives of Jesus and John the Baptist were closely connected, beginning with their births. (Even pre-birth announcements)

- a. Luke tells us about the announcement (to Zacharias by Gabriel) of John's birth just as he tells us about the announcement to Mary of the birth of Jesus.
 - b. He informs us of the visit of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, the mother-to-be of John.
 - c. He tells us of the births of both John and Jesus.
 - d. The baptism of Jesus by John is recorded in both Luke and Matthew. Matthew tells us that John identified Jesus as the one who was to come, the one that he was not worthy to remove his sandals, the one by whom he needed to be baptized rather than the other way around.
 - e. The ministries of John and Jesus were also related. They both called for repentance in anticipation of the coming kingdom of God. (Both stressed the high ethical demands of the citizens of God's kingdom.)
2. Yet in Luke 7 John sends messengers to ask Jesus the question, "Are you the One Who is coming, or do we look for someone else?"
- a. Why would John ask such a question? Was he doubting his earlier pronouncements? Was he seeking reassurance? Probably a little of both.
 - b. There were differences in their ministries. John preached judgment as a primary aspect of God's Kingdom. Jesus did not neglect judgment, but He also emphasized God's love and forgiveness. With all of the reports coming in about Jesus and his ministry it was appropriate for John to seek some assurance, some confirmation, and some clarity concerning the identity of Jesus. ("I believe that I know who you are - Are you that One we've been promised?")
 - c. Jesus did not answer directly John's inquiry. Rather he told John's disciples to go back and report to John what they had seen and heard. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. Jesus' identity was confirmed by what he did, not simply by what he said. Look at the evidence.
- C. Caesarea Philippi was a place and an event where the question, "Are you the One?" was answered. However, in this instance it was Jesus who asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" (He was aware of their talk, speculation – Responses – John the Baptist one of the prophets.)
1. It was Peter who responded with the statement that Jesus was the Messiah. (God's anointed One – He understood who this rabbi was.)

2. Why could he say this? He had been with Jesus as He had ministered and taught. His eyes and ears had been opened to God's revelation.
 3. Yet, we must be reminded that, like John the Baptist, Peter's understanding of Jesus, while sufficient, was distorted and limited. (Response of Jesus – Jerusalem, suffering – Peter “God forbid.”)
- D. Pontius Pilate at the trial of Jesus asked, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Are you the One that they say that you are? Or, are you a religious zealot bent on the overthrow of Rome? (Pilate's conclusion – probably “no” on both questions.)
- E. The crowd at the crucifixion wanted to know if Jesus was the One (their question was shallow in the form of taunting, mocking) – if He is the Messiah let him come down from the cross, then we will believe in Him (element of sincerity). They also had a distorted view of God's anointed. He would be all powerful, not one who would die on a cross between two thieves. They failed to see that Jesus was the One.
- F. What we need to see in these questions are the ideas and images that these people had of Jesus. In many cases their terms and descriptions were correct but their understanding was wrong. It was shallow, limited, or misguided, or misinterpreted. (Even as such, it was enough – sufficient – satisfactory)
1. Yet what we must not overlook is the fact that some of these along with many others reached the conclusion that, “Yes, Jesus Is the One.” - John the Baptist, Peter, the apostles, Mary Magdalene, the Centurion at the crucifixion, Zaccheus, Barnabas, Paul, Cornelius, Priscilla and Aquila, and thousands and thousands and millions and millions of others through the centuries have affirmed that He is the One.
 2. Importantly, it was not their words but their actions that affirmed their belief in Jesus. They gave their time, their talents, and their testimonies, as well as their lives in many cases.
 3. Jesus is the One that can bring redemption to the lost, love to the unloved, hope to the hopeless, faith to the faithless, acceptance to the rejected, strength to the weak, joy to the sorrowful, and on and on.
- II. What about you and me? How can we answer the question, “Is Jesus the One?” Is he relevant to our lives today? Or, is He simply the basis of an old religion? Do we simply give adherence to an old story of a young child? Is our role simply to carry on the tradition of some ancient mythology that has been handed down to us? (Or can we say, must we say, to this generation, “Jesus is the One?”)
- It seems to me that there are three ways that we can answer this question, “Is Jesus the One?”

1. We can begin by accepting the witness of the Scriptures. The Bible both asks the question, “Is Jesus the One?” and answers it affirmatively. In the long run we must have confidence in what the Bible has to say about Jesus and Who He is. It uses many terms, none of which by themselves is complete. He is the Messiah, the Servant, Immanuel, the King of Kings, the Prophet, the Rabbi, the Word, the Savior, the Redeemer, the Great Shepherd, the Physician, and on and on. (The writers of the Bible, especially the New Testament, have proclaimed that Jesus is the One. Our response is clear – we either accept their witness, or we reject it.)
2. We can also answer the question by looking at those around us whose lives have been changed. For some, the changes have been radical. Alcoholics, drug addicts, outcasts of society, or just simply the aimless looking for direction. For others, raised in Christian homes and nurtured by the church, their lives simply seem to reflect a gradual transition. Jesus would answer our question today by saying, “Just take a good look at what is going on in the lives of those who have followed me – there is all the evidence you will ever need.” (People who have influenced you – parents, friends, neighbors, teachers, etc. – Their lives verified their answers to our question.)
3. But we can also look at our own lives and what has taken place. Like those of the New Testament age, I’m not certain that I fully understand who Jesus is. My vision is not always clear. My terminology is not always accurate. And my interpretations frequently leave something to be desired. But this does not take away from Whom Jesus is and what He can do. (Regardless of how I understand or misunderstand ...) I’m not sure where I would be and what I would be doing had I not accepted Jesus by faith. (East St. Louis) But I can look at where I am and how I got here. My faith in Christ has made a significant difference in my life – my relationship to God is founded on my faith in Christ, and that has affected every important area of my life – my family: wife, son; education: first in my family on either side to get a college education – why? Because Christians cared and kept caring; vocation. Is Jesus the One? My own testimony says, “Yes.” What about your testimony? Christmas is a good time in the words of the old him, to “Count Your Blessings.” (Can you recount those experiences in your life which enable you to answer affirmatively that “Jesus is the One?”)

III. If you and I conclude through faith that Jesus is the One, what does this mean in terms of our relationships to those that we encounter daily?

A. First, it places upon us a responsibility to live a life reflective of the influence and presence of Jesus. Our conduct, our attitudes, our personal relations ought to demonstrate the ideals and principles established by Jesus.

This includes values, ethical and moral practices, and attitudes. (Respect for God and man and ourselves, integrity, honesty) We must demonstrate the love of Jesus by being loving. We must proclaim the forgiveness of Christ by being forgiving. We must overcome those issues which divide us, and demonstrate a quest for unity. We must reveal concern and compassion to those in need, to those who hurt. As we have found acceptance by God through Christ, we must learn to accept those whom we previously found unacceptable.

B. Second, we must grow in our task of convincing the world that Jesus is the one. We must be evangelists. We must become ministers. We must know and fulfill our mission.

1. This is not easy for so many Christians of the 21st century. We have learned to accept a passive role when it comes to proclaiming a witness to Christ.
2. But if what we believe about Jesus is really true, if He really is the One, then we must accept the unmistakable mandate to “Go, to make disciples, to baptize them, and to teach them.”
3. We must do this through our own personal witness and testimony.
4. And we must do this through our cooperation with the church, the community of believers, as together we attempt to proclaim throughout our communities, nation, and the world the Good News that Jesus is the One.

Conclusion:

A. Christmas is a time of receiving and in Christ we have received God’s greatest gift. As we accept God’s gift almost 2,000 years after the birth of Jesus we can affirm that Jesus is still the One.

B. But Christmas is also a time of sharing – and we have an obligation to share this gift with the people of our world. To those who are separated from God, to those with need, to those with hurt, pain, and sorrow, to those with unanswered questions and unsolved problems - Jesus is the One. We need not look for another.

C. John asked the question of Jesus, “Are you the One?” What answer do you give today?