

The One Who is to Come:
December 14, 2025

You remember... **[1 Luther]**
Martin Luther...
The old German guy...
Who inadvertently founded the Lutheran Church...
By nailing the 95 theses to the door...
Of the Wittenberg Castle Church...

Well... he was a professor there.
At the University of Wittenberg...
And had a doctorate degree... in theology.

However... it was a different and chaotic time.
Luther did not live a protected life.
In a ivory tower...
That's not where he learned his theology.
I mean... it's where he earned his degree...

But his theology grew out of
His ongoing anguished quest...
To feel the grace of God.
To be reassured that God...
Loved him beyond the curse of his own sin.

For Luther, theology was not simply the academic study of religion.
For him... it was a lifelong process of struggle, doubt, and faith.

As a result...
Luther never tired of saying,
Only experience makes a theologian. **[2 Luther Quote]**

This is a quote:
I did not learn my theology all at once
But I had to search deeper for it,
Where my temptations took me. ...

Not understanding, reading, or speculation,
But living - no, dying and being damned-
Make a theologian.

Well... with all due respect... I would take it one step further...
I would say... we learn our theology...
By living, dying, being damned...
And then... being raised from the dead.

Right. It's that last step... we need...
That gives us strength.
It's being raised... by God...
Over and over again...
That teaches us...
That God is good.

I know this is a little hard to understand...
Because typically I like to talk about love and hope...
And life and grace.
And all the good things.

But there's more to life. **[3 Hard Things]**
And sometimes...
We live through really hard things.
Have you lived through really hard things?

Things that hurt us.
Make us afraid.
Things we struggle.
To get through...

But those difficult things... also become...
Our defining moments... of faith...
And influence us...
For the rest of our lives.

For example...
I have told you before...
I grew up... with an abusive step-father...

We had to walk around...
On those proverbial egg shells...
So he wouldn't get angry...

We sneaked out of the back door our home...
Several times... late at night...
Because he was on a tirade.

It didn't feel safe growing up.
Mom was good.
She was strong.
But he was bigger... and meaner.

So because of that experience...
My heart... has been tempered...
In the fires of a rough childhood...
Which has created in me...
A desire to protect and nurture children.
It is part of who I am.

Right? But I'm not the only one.
You have had difficult experiences...
That have formed who you are...
And how you choose to act in the world.

And I would propose to you...
That God can use your real life difficulties...
To form you.

To cause your faith to grow.
Because it takes faith and hope...
To get through those hard things.

And ultimately... God will use those difficult things...
To care for and to love other people... through you.
You know things...
They need to know.

Yes? You still with me???

I have always found this scripture...
Extremely powerful.
Because... anyone.
Who has ever needed...
To be reassured in their faith.

Anyone who has ever been afraid...
And looking for God...
In their lives.

Can identify with John the Baptist... **[4 John Prison]**
In this story.

John is in prison.
But prison didn't work... like it does today.
It wasn't a place...
Where people were warehoused...
To serve long term sentences.

It was a transitional place.
Where you were either...
Waiting for a trial...
Or waiting for execution.

We know how it ends for John.
He knew... there was not going to be...
A good ending... a happy resolution...
To his story.

So in a moment of honest pure desperation.
John sends word to Jesus...
Through his disciples...
And asks the question...
That is hurting his heart.

Please Jesus.
I just have to know.
Please tell me the truth.

Are you the ONE who is to come...
Or should we be looking...
Should we be waiting.

Should we be hoping.
For someone else?

Tell me the Truth.

Don't you think...
It's a little weird...
That John asks Jesus...
If he is The One who is to Come?

I mean... John knows Jesus is there.
He knows that Jesus was born...
And baptized...
And teaching...
And preaching.

He has seen Jesus...
With his own eyes.

So... why would he ask...
If he is The One who is to Come?
When he's already there!

Because it's not a question... **[5 Who is to Come]**
About the presence of Jesus.
It's a question about his identity.

The One who is to Come...
Is an official title.

It's a title that all the Jewish people...
Would have known.
It's another name...
For the Messiah.

You may be more familiar with the longer title.
The One who was.
And is.
And is to come.

This speaks to the eternal nature of God.
God who has no beginning.
God who has no end.

So John is asking Jesus...
Are you eternal?
Are you the Messiah?
Are you the Son of God?

I really need to know.
We all really need to know.

And as much as we can hear...
The desperation in John's voice...
I hope you can hear...
The strength...
The authority...
The power...
In Jesus' voice.

He looks at those disciples...
Who came from John...
And he says to them... **[6 Go Tell John]**
You go tell John.

The blind can see.
The lame can walk.
The lepers are clean.
The deaf can hear.
The dead are raised.
And the poor have been given good news.

So without actually saying it...
He was telling John...
Yes John.
I know you're afraid.
But it's all true.
I am the messiah.

You can tell by what I do.
How I serve broken and hurting people.

How I bring good news...
To those who desperately NEED...
To hear good news.

Which is the real mission of the messiah.
Not to restore Israel.
Not to end the oppression of the Roman Government.
Not to fulfill the expectations of the people...

But to humbly serve...
Those who need to be served.

To heal...
Those who need to be healed.

To give hope...
To those running short on hope...
Like John...
Sitting in prison.

And ultimately...
To give life...
To those who are dead.

So Jesus sends a word...
Through John's disciples...
To reassure John...

To tell him...
What he needs to hear...

That John has not wasted his life.
He has not hoped in vain.

He has not...
Confessed his faith...
And worked his work...
And been the Prophet...
Who made the way ready...
For Jesus... for nothing.

Jesus tells him. **[7 I AM]**
John... look at who I am.

You not been abandoned by God.

I AM PRESENT.
I AM here.
I AM the power of God...
Set loose in the world.

I AM the one...
Who was...
And is...
And is to come...

I AM the messiah.

So the reason I mention it today.
Is not only because...
It's the scripture verse...
For the day.

But also because...
Maybe... just maybe... YOU are John.

Maybe you are going through...
Something incredibly difficult right now.

Maybe you are uncertain...
About the days to come.

Maybe you are looking...
For a little hope... and strength...
In the middle of your struggle.

Maybe you are asking me...
To tell you the Truth today.

Is it true? Is there hope?
Can I possibly get through this difficult time...
And live again?

AND... Is Jesus really...
Who he says he is?

And so... beloved of God...
I say to you today...
On behalf of... and by the authority...
Of our Lord and Savior...
Whose name is Jesus.

The blind can see.
The lame can walk.
The lepers are clean.
The deaf can hear.
The dead are raised.
And the poor have been given good news.

He is the messiah...
He is the One who is to come again.
So yes... yes.

You will get through this.
You will live again.

Thanks be to God.
Amen!