

Tuesday, May 19, 2020

Blessed are those who take no offense at Jesus - Pastor Hank French

So John summoned two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" When the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?'" Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind. And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me" (Luke 7:18-23).

John the Baptist has a lesson to teach us. When he baptized Jesus, he believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the one sent by God to accomplish God's purposes. John told the crowds who had come to him to be baptized that: "One who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Luke 3:16-17).

He believed the Messiah would bring the judgement and wrath of an angry God and reward the righteous (wheat) while condemning sinners (chaff). He was expecting Jesus to start the winnowing, to start separating the wheat from the chaff. And like many such people, he apparently believed that he knew who deserved the reward and who deserved condemnation.

But he began to hear rumors about Jesus that confused him. He just didn't seem to be doing the Messiah thing right. There didn't seem to be any rewards for the righteous or condemnation for the sinners. So, John sent some of his followers to ask Jesus if he was the Messiah or should they wait for someone else to start the winnowing—someone who fit his assumptions and expectations.

Jesus responded that there would be no winnowing. He was not into wrath and judgment and unquenchable fire; he was into compassion, mercy, forgiveness, healing not hating, redemption not retribution. He did not live up to John's assumptions and expectations.

Like John the Baptist, we all have preconceived assumptions and expectations about who Jesus is and what he ought to be doing, and all too often these assumptions and expectations stem from who we are and not who Jesus is. A Jesus scholar named Marcus Borg wrote a wonderful book titled "Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time." Which is to say we should approach Jesus with what is called "beginner's mind." Lay aside everything you think you know about Jesus, all your assumptions about who he is, about what he

taught, about what he wants for us and from us. Then read the four Gospels as if you were meeting Jesus again for the first time.

Prayer: Holy God, open my eyes that I may see the real Jesus and not the Jesus of my assumptions and expectations. Open my mind and heart that I may understand the real Jesus and follow him. Amen.