

Luke 7:18-35 am

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Preacher: Glyn Williams

[0 : 00] Gospel of Luke chapter 7 beginning at verse 18. John's disciples told him, that is Jesus, about all these things.

Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?

When the men came to Jesus, they said, John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else? At that very time, Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind.

So he replied to the messengers, go back and report to John, What you have seen and heard, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me. After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John, What did you go out into the desert to see?

[1 : 20] A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces.

But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way before you.

I tell you, among those born of women, there is no one greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right because they had been baptized by John.

But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves because they had not been baptized by John. To what then can I compare the people of this generation?

[2 : 24] What are they like? And now I want you to make note of this illustration. They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other.

We played the flute for you and you did not dance. We sang a dirge and you did not cry. For John the Baptist came, neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say he has a demon.

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say here is a glutton and a drunkard. A friend of tax collectors and sinners, but wisdom is proved right by all her children.

We'll be looking at Luke chapter 7 verses 18 to 35, but coming down to one, two verses. First of all, children at play. Have you ever walked past a primary school at playtime?

And you hear the rabble that's going on. If you just walk past, or maybe you're inside the playground because you're a teacher or an assistant, and you know what, that absolute racket is going on.

[3 : 39] I become a governor again for a local school, but normally I miss the playtimes because I go in the evening and finish about half past seven when the children have gone. But they're skipping about.

They're making a din. It's absolute mayhem. But have you then tried to focus on a particular group? Not for disciplinary reasons, but because you just want to look at these children.

And you look at these children, and they're playing perhaps Tig. Or they're playing hopscotch. Or they're playing charades. Dressing up.

Or pretending to be acting out something. And that's what we're going to look at, actually, this morning. But sometimes they won't play properly, will they?

They'll say, oh, I'm fed up with this. Let's do something else. Let's play some other game. Or they change the accepted rules. Children will dream up their own rules and then inflict it on their friends.

[4 : 37] They won't follow the lead of others. They fall out. And they're never satisfied. That's what you'll see if you just focus in a particular group. They're all lovely, aren't they, kids? Great.

That's no problem there. But that, in miniature, is what many adults are like. So we must make note. Because here, and the verses particularly, are in verses 32, 31 and 32, to what then can I compare the people of this generation?

What are they like? They're like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other. We played the flute for you and you didn't dance. We sang a dirge and you didn't cry.

That's precisely the illustration. This isn't a playground, but it's a marketplace on a slack day where the kids are allowed to play in those days. There's room to run about. Some children want to dance in a happy way.

So others pretend to play or did play if they got a flute amongst them, as though in a marriage. This is what children do. The dancing implies here a marriage.

[5 : 44] And so somebody would pretend to be the bride, someone the groom, someone the officiating officer, and so on. Someone would pretend to be the bridesmaids or whatever culture fully there was in those days.

And they'd have a joyful time. And maybe some began to dance joyfully, but they got fed up, they got bored. And they stopped dancing. So the floaters said, oh, dear me.

You won't sing, you won't go on, you won't dance, you won't continue. They'd play at all. And the game stopped. So the children who played the flute did something else.

They played a dirge. We sang a dirge, you did not cry. A mournful tune, which fitted just like a funeral. Just for play, playing at funerals.

It may not sound very nice, but that's what they were doing. The others were meant to mourn like professional mourners, because they had professional mourners in those days.

[6 : 46] And some got fed up with that too. And they stopped. So the floaters stopped too. The question is, why or what was our Lord saying by using this illustration?

What does it mean for us today? For me, it captures my imagination, these children playing. Playing something nice and then playing something a bit sad. But nevertheless, playing at it.

As children will play at anything, really. And I want first to give you what this means by looking at the style of John the Baptist. Because those two means of playing are meant to be a contrast.

They're meant to be a contrast between the culture of John the Baptist and the culture of our Lord. And we need to see how the two come together. Because that's what the illustration of the children means.

They had two contrasting things they were playing. John the Baptist then had been arrested on false grounds and he was in prison. He didn't understand why Jesus was leaving him in jail.

[7 : 51] He's bound to think, well, I've just begun my ministry, basically. I've been baptising people. The Lord Jesus is coming and I'll fade into the background. But you wouldn't expect your life to be completed at that time, to be fair.

And he knew Jesus was the powerful one. He believed fully in the Lord Jesus Christ. And in verse 20, we have this.

When the men came to Jesus, they said, John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, are you the one who was to come? Or should we expect someone else? You might say there was a little down in the way John felt, although he did believe.

He'd been preaching about the Lord Jesus as he came past, when he was baptising. So you might count this a bit of spiritual depression. The message came then. Should we seek for somebody else?

Our Lord then worked many miracles and sent the messages back to report on our Lord's wonderful signs of being the Messiah. The Lord has healed that person.

[8 : 53] The Lord has healed that. He's done marvellous things. Evidence that he's the Messiah, the Redeemer. Our Lord then took the opportunity to honour John the Baptist in the way in which John had been preaching.

And so verse 24, we read as follows. After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John.

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? Perhaps you'd expect that. No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces.

But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, I'm more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written. I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way before you.

That's the father talking to the son. So John had been preaching, a man strong in his preaching, about the need to repent and be baptised, to believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour, not shaken by what other people said.

[10:04] John certainly wasn't shaken by that. And John did wear rough clothing. In other words, he was on the dour side. He was on the serious side, one would have to say.

He spoke, he didn't seem to have a lot of one-to-one with people. But his message was entirely right. His message was spot on because he was God's messenger pointing to Jesus.

When Jesus spoke up for John, even the tax collectors, who had a bad reputation for fraud, agreed that God was right and just.

Verse 29, all the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right because they'd been baptised by John. The message had been vindicated, that God was right.

All the things he said were right. That's the phrase. Now, the Pharisees and the lawyers sadly rejected the will of God for themselves, namely, to repent, to think again about their pride and turn to Christ.

[11:12] Now then, these are the ones, the ones who did not respond, are those to whom, it refers in verse 32 there, we played the flute for you, you did not dance, but we sang a dirge, you did not cry.

And in this sense, John the Baptist is a little bit like the dirge. It's a contrast. We sang a dirge, you did not cry. It's an illustration of John being very, very serious, very, very minimalistic, very minimum on what he ate and drank.

We mourn to you, you did not weep. Yeah? John the Baptist was serious. He was even severe. He didn't joyfully mix with others very easily.

He didn't have a good meal with people we read. He didn't have bread and wine like the Lord Jesus did. But he was right. And they should have believed what he said.

In other words, some people are never satisfied. You know, some people come to our churches and make excuses about not becoming a Christian. Deary me, you are so serious, you Christians.

[12:27] Even though sometimes we show our joy, very much so. Oh dear, how boring to live like you do. Goodie goodie. You can't do this, can't do that.

Kill joys, they say. Judgmental even, we mustn't be that. Let your hair down. Have some fun.

Christians do have fun, but not in the way particularly that they're talking about.

Give your conscience a rest. Well, you can't do that, but people say that. Why are you trying to be good? Nobody can be that good, so eat, drink, for tomorrow we die.

A little blurring of God's laws doesn't matter. You only live once. That might be the response of people as they come to our churches and they think we're too serious.

And that is what is so neatly summed up as we mourned to you, but you did not weep. You did not weep for your sin. You did not repent.

[13:27] You did not turn to Christ. In reality, you're not willing to weep for your sins as an offence to God. And people, of course, need to be told that.

But is that picture right of the church? No, it's a twisting of the truth. Oh, John the Baptist, don't listen to him, they're saying.

So, we sang a dirge. You did not cry. They even said he has a demon. John the Baptist. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine.

You say he has a demon. Can't win. Some people are never satisfied. You should take note about the serious nature of John the Baptist. The central message of John the Baptist.

Believe. Behold, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. John was saying that and he'd say that in a very joyful manner, although it'd be serious as well.

[14:26] So, that's the style of John the Baptist. Now then, look at the style of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is our Lord Jesus Christ.

The contrast in style and culture is very strong indeed. Not apparently teetotal. Ready to have a good meal with people. Indeed, ready to have a good meal with the very lowest of people.

Not just a mix and be in their culture. No. Separate from that. But, making contact with people where they are. If we call it today being relevant, won't we?

We call it being relevant to young people. Mixing, quite rightly so. That's what we need to do. Rather relaxed in many ways, the Lord Jesus, yes, but deadly serious in conversation about spiritual things.

You can imagine our Lord mixing with people, being happy with people, smiling with people and then when he comes to his message, when he comes to what he really wants to say to them, to reach out and to love them, then he'd be dead serious about that.

[15 : 37] Now, as far as John's concerned, our Lord Jesus lived a holier life inwardly and outwardly than John the Baptist. No one can compare with the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a comparison here, but if we're talking about sanctification, John, with all his seriousness, cannot be as holy as the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus, with all his social roundness and his joy and his happiness and his love, is bang on, absolutely holy. He is God. He comes from God.

He's the Son of God. He's God the Son. So, Jesus didn't talk small talk all night. John the Baptist certainly didn't. He made loving connections with all people, did our Lord, and then got to the nub of a person's need for salvation.

In other words, our Lord, of course, was anointed in preaching. Read that early on in his ministry. But he was good one-to-one. We need people who are good one-to-one.

[16 : 42] We all, if we're Christians, should aim one-to-one. Our Lord spoke about the hope of salvation through faith in him. He spoke of joy in life, abundant joy for those who received him.

Abundant life. We'd like that. And that can only happen through the awesome sacrifice of our Lord Jesus on behalf of sinners like us.

So, you would have to say that our Lord's culture was different from John's, but the message was the same.

Obviously, warm and loving was the Lord Jesus, and this is the Christ we preach. And John and Christ came from different angles, but the message was the same.

Now, if you go back to our text, verse 32, our Lord is represented by that sentence, we played the flute for you, and you did not dance.

[17 : 46] The Lord Jesus represents that acting out of a wedding, because Christians will be married to him in the end. There is going to be a wedding feast. So, you would expect that he be compared with that, whereas John is compared with Sangha Dirge, you did not cry.

The prospect of the marriage here between the church and between the Lord Jesus Christ. You didn't receive the joyful news of God's love for you. See, people sometimes see the joy of Christians, but still don't respond because they want to go their own way, like children do in the playground.

That's what happens. God sent his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die for us, to be our saviour. And if you're talking about having a happy and fulfilled life, turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, because you'll find one there, not to all the other props which people think will give them a relaxed and fulfilled life. And what about when this life is over? So, verse 34, the Son of Man came eating and drinking. See? That makes it clear what that little illustration means, that touching little illustration. But the Lord with all that joyful and friendly one-to-one is distorted.

[19 : 20] The people distort what he's doing. Oh, here's a glutton and a drunker. A friend of tax collectors and sinners. Yeah, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Not because he's going to become like them, but because he's going to reach the lowest of the low who admit they're sinners.

And if you're not a Christian here this morning, that is what you need to do. To admit that you cannot keep God's laws and not twist the good news and twist how Christians are perhaps.

A friend of tax collectors and sinners, yes, in order to reach them properly, not to compromise. A word particularly for Christians here.

There are different cultures among Christians and Christian churches today. churches, even when the message of Christ and him crucified is the same, there will still be some variation in culture and approach.

No point in just looking for some church of a certain culture you like. The Lord leads you to hear the gospel in a certain church and you need to hear it there.

[20 : 38] Churches we trust will always want to develop biblically and they need to be as serious about God and salvation as both the Lord Jesus and John the Baptist.

That is the common link, the message, not always the slight differences in culture. But churches wanting to develop biblically are also wanting, I hope, to retain reverence.

keen to show that reverence for God and the Lord Jesus was reverent concerning his heavenly father. And John the Baptist was certainly reverent about the Lord Jesus and his father.

Reverence for God is important. And that you can have differences in culture even when the message is the same.

Still be joyful. I'm sure John was inwardly. And our Lord Jesus Christ as being human and under the direction of his heavenly father, honoured his heavenly father.

[21 : 53] He took the bad news of sin and the good news of salvation very seriously indeed. And so we also must show that compassion and love which enabled him, the Lord Jesus, to mix with all sorts of people without compromise.

But our Lord did not show at any point a light or a worldly culture. Despite his joy, his happiness, his mixing, sometimes his relaxiness more than John the Baptist, he was deeply involved in the society of his day and we must also be.

Now, God is proved right. I want you to look now at that verse 35. It's not an easy sentence but it can be unraveled.

But wisdom is proved right by all her children. Do you know that phrase proved right goes back to verse 29 when the people, even the tax collectors, acknowledged that God's way was right.

And then on verse 35, but wisdom is proved right by all her children. It means showing something to be right and just.

[23 : 15] And the wisdom of John and the wisdom of Jesus is proven when Jesus comes into the heart and into the life of those who put their trust in Jesus.

That's what it's saying. But wisdom is proved right by all her children. And it's lovely that children here can be of any age. Because those who believe in the Lord Jesus become children in Christ. And it's lovely that that really aims back at that first verse talking about children playing in the marketplace. Because little children too are converted.

And perhaps some of you were converted at a very early age. but the children playing. And now some became children in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And after that would grow. But wisdom is proved right by all her children. The wisdom of John and Jesus together collectively is proved by the children of whatever age who believed in Jesus.

[24 : 21] as great as universal to become children in Christ by faith in him. Those who become wise as they discover the way of salvation and immediately have a wisdom which the world doesn't have.

Yet some things take time to develop. But as soon as you become a Christian you note how wise a converted person is because he has a new heart. Because he has the Holy Spirit living in his heart. and the most disabled of people show that great wisdom that the Lord Jesus had and that John the Baptist had.

So is it not very neat and appropriate that the word children is used in that original illustration? Even the tax collectors prove that God is right and they have been baptised by John.

But when you become a Christian yes the words proved right show that yes the teaching of scripture is right you change when you become a Christian but proved right also has another meaning.

[25 : 32] The word right means just and indeed in the authorised version here it talks about being justified. God is justified by all her children.

right. Now you can't justify God in the sense that you make him just he is just. But there it means that God is proven right as it says in the NIV here God is shown to be right.

But when you relate being just to those who becomes Christians it is those who are considered just. Because Christians are not right on everything but we do know that we are going to be considered just.

Morally just. Immediately we become a Christian. So that if we had to leave this earth quickly we would be counted as just. Reckoned as just.

That is the other meaning of the word justified or just. That is if you like the thrilling thing. Not the idea oh I told you so I am right.

[26 : 41] That person's life has changed or even my life has changed. Not that sort of vindication. But being considered just before God we are counted as right and just and they are forgiven by God.

How else can we approach God except through the perfect innocent just Lord Jesus Christ. How else can we go to heaven except by being forgiven now.

Admitting we're sinners and doing something about it now. And that I urge anyone who's not turned to the saviour yet to do. Receiving Christ's own rightness.

Righteousness. And then being made perfect at death. Can't be perfect before that. To enter the glory of heaven.

Those who remain without Christ are like the fickle children wanting to play only by their own changing rules.

[27 : 46] As we see in our society today. Society plays games. They get interest out of this, that and the other. Some TV programme, some sportsman doesn't last.

They get fed up with that and go on to something else. Yes, some people become life supporters of some football club. But they disappoint them. The teams disappoint them.

My team lost yesterday. I'm still trying to get over it. And this is what happens. We can't find satisfaction in those things. We've got to find satisfaction in the one who makes us just, who is holy, whom we want to imitate.

So there are serious consequences to not responding the wise child, is the one who would like to follow God's rules but realise they can't.

But there's someone who has kept God's rules and that's the Lord Jesus. And therefore to have him in our life means we will enter heaven because we're considered right and just.

[28 : 57] And so he or she must put their trust in the one who has kept God's rules. the Lord Jesus himself who is the author of the Ten Commandments not just the Father.

He is God the Son and he is the one who has paid the penalty for sin on the cross. And it does require faith alone in him.

Some people are never satisfied. Are you one of them? You go from pillar to post. You criticise Christians Christians for being goody-goody and being too serious but then you criticise Christians for maybe too bright, too involved in the world.

There can't be something in this because you're not different from the world. They twist words.

Some people are never satisfied. They've got to look not at the culture but at the message, the same message that John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ had.

Don't be one who's never satisfied. Our satisfaction is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. The message of John the Baptist and our Lord was exactly the same.

[30 : 14] Of course their styles are different but the message is to repent and to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ who has died for us and risen again.

Let's pray. Father we thank you for the way that you help us to believe in you.

We thank you for the way you convict of sin. We thank you for the way that you give joy in believing. we give thank you for the way you do something that nobody else can do.

And Lord as we just look at this passage when we think of the children when we think of them playing when we think of them stopping when we think of them starting another game and then stopping again.

Bless the children not only who are in Sunday school now. Bless all those children who we meet during the week perhaps first hand at a school that they may turn to you that they may hear from the Bible again that Christians will be in those schools telling stories not pushily but bringing the word of God that you might bring the increase.

[31 : 40] So we pray for Christian teachers. Ask our Lord they'd see children saved. And Father it might be adults too and young people.

Young people who are tempted to become worldly and to lack reverence. We pray oh God you show them that wonderful balance of being happy and joyful in Christ yet deadly serious and right about the gospel and the good news of the gospel and in all their ways that they will honour you and revere you and bow the knee to you.

Lord help us to be like that in Jesus name. Amen. Father we thank you that you sent your son to be human like us but remain in God the son.

We thank you that he alone satisfies in a deep spiritual need that gives us forgiveness and joy and happiness and rest peace from our sins.

Forgive us the sins we still commit. Cleanse us anew today. Help us to follow Christ to be like him and Lord we thank you that he is the very deepest satisfaction because when this life is over everything else goes everything except you and our faith in you and our expectation to go to heaven entirely because of our Lord Jesus' own goodness his own justness his own rightness his own righteousness so bless us and encourage us today and particularly Lord it is your day we thank you for it we thank you for worship comfort the souls we pray of any who suffer grant oh Lord that their satisfaction may be felt and truly to be in you and in your son through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen so we believe