

Who in the world are you looking for? Matthew Ch.11, 1-19.

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” The words of John the Baptist when questioned about the person of Jesus, who had also just spoken “I baptize only in water, yet among you stands one whom you do not know, of whom I am not worthy to untie his shoelaces.” (John 1:26-29) Yet later he still sent his followers to ask of Jesus “Are you the expected One, or shall we look for someone else?” So even among the most faithful of humans the doubt of God’s veracity and faithfulness lingers.

Jesus answers John’s question, 11:1-6.

- The question from John comes after an indeterminate period of time from his encounter with Jesus at the Jordan, where he witnessed the Holy Spirit descending upon the Lord. _____
- Jesus’ response: “go and tell John what you see.”
 - *The blind see, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.* _____
 - He was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 35. _____

Yet not to discount the impact of the baptizing evangelist, Jesus turns the focus to the impact of John himself, 11:7-11.

- *What did you go out into the wilderness to look at?* _____
 - *“A cowardly man in nice clothes?”* _____
 - *“Ah, but you went to see a prophet.”* _____
- The human attraction to spectacle. _____
- And even the work of John had its limit. _____

The heart of human arrogance: the next 8 verses cut to the heart of the historical challenge of human’s to god’s sovereignty and ultimate power over all things.

The kingdom of heaven assaulted by humans, 11:12-15. (These 4 verses require lots of coffee and many midnight hours)

- The cryptic words concerning violence against the kingdom of heaven, v.12. _____
- Linking John to Elijah, and then imposing a God endowed understanding of scripture, v.14. _____

The Marketplace Analogy: The core issue in the dialogue between humanity and God, 11:16-19.

- Children, flutes, and dances: *Why won’t you play the game we want to play? V.16-17.* _____
 - Attempting to choreograph God. _____
 - Yet, how dare we? _____
- In this parallel and in John’s question we witness the effect of the most basic of human conditions – **dissatisfaction.**
 - When our lives are full we are dissatisfied. _____
 - When challenged we seek return to the safety of our former condition – dissatisfaction. _____
 - We are prone to always find fault. _____
 - Ultimately we place the blame on God. _____
 - The skeptics sneer at God. _____
 - The ambivalent look for another church. _____
 - And the most faithful fear. _____

Since the beginning God has been watching this little dance being played out by his creation: by the angels who fell, by Adam and Eve, by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by Moses, by Elijah, and by John. And these were his most faithful servants. As for the rest of humanity, they have been renegotiating and redefining their already twisted notions of God. They almost always end up with a warped specter that resembles themselves more than anything. What, then, is that quality of God that moves him to such patience with us?

A Prayer

*You Changeless One, whom nothing changes!
You who are changeless in love, who just for our own
good do not let yourself change – would that we also
might will our own well-being, let ourselves be brought
up, in unconditional obedience, by your changelessness
to find rest and to rest and to rest in your
changelessness! You are not like a human being. If he
is to maintain a mere measure of changelessness, he
must not have too much that can move him and must
not let himself be moved by too much. But everything
moves you, and in infinite love. Even what we human
beings call a trifle and unmoved pass by, the sparrow's
need, that moves you; what we so often scarcely pay
attention to, a human sigh, that moves you, Infinite
Love. But nothing changes you, you Changeless One!
O you who in infinite love let yourself be moved, may
this our prayer also move you to bless it so that the
prayer may change the one who is praying into
conformity with your changeless will, You Changeless
One!*

*Soren Kierkegaard,
The Changelessness of God, 1855.*

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