

If anyone should be absolutely clear about who Jesus is, it should be John the Baptist. He is not just a prophet. More, he is the way-preparer. The one who was sent to prepare the way for the Messiah, the Coming One.

John used to be clear about Jesus. *“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* John pointed to Jesus using these very words. He baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. He saw the Spirit of God descend upon Jesus in the form of a dove. He said of Jesus, *“He must increase, but I must decrease.”*

Well, decrease John did. He decreased so much that he ended up in a dungeon. For an entire year he has been confined to this dark prison. And now he is unclear. He appears confused. And so, he sends his disciples to Jesus to ask, *“Are You the coming one, or shall we look for another?”*

If John is unclear about Jesus, how can we be so certain and so clear about Him? It’s a fair question. Maybe some of your friends have asked it of you. “How can you be so certain who Jesus is?” Maybe you’ve even asked it of yourself.

When John’s disciples approach Jesus in our text, He does not get upset and become defensive. He very simply points to His resume. *“Go and tell John what you hear and see.”* And they have heard and seen plenty. The blind have received sight. The lame walk. Lepers are cleansed. The deaf hear. Not only this, but the dead are raised up, and the good news is preached to the poor.

This is an impressive resume. People should be taking notice. And they are. It’s why crowds are following Jesus. The same crowds who went out to John in the wilderness. John performed no such miracles as these. But Jesus is doing all of them. How could anyone be unclear about Jesus? If He is not the Messiah, who is?

Yet not even the crowds see Jesus for who He is. He is popular. He is a rock star. But He is a passing fad. One day they follow Him, and the next they walk away from him. It’s obvious that the crowds are unclear about Jesus. John the Baptist is unclear. Is there anyone who is clear? Anyone who could answer John’s question about who Jesus is?

To reply to this, we need to hear what Jesus says about John. He says, *“Among those born of women, there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.”* That’s quite a compliment. But then He adds these words, *“Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”*

Well, who would that be? If you measure greatness in the kingdom of heaven by one’s service to the Lord, few could measure up to John. His whole life was one of service. His purpose in life was to serve. He had no interest in serving himself. He served God. He did what he was called to do with courage and faithfulness. And for this he ends up in a dungeon. No wonder that *“among those born of women, there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.”*

But who are these least ones that Jesus speaks of? The “*one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than (John).*” Jesus once put forth a little child as the best example of greatness. Is it because children are innocent? No. Every parent knows that. We could argue that little children cannot be greater than John because what have they done in service to the Lord? Nothing really. They are not those who serve, but those who must be served. Who is more needy than a little child in fact?

But this is precisely how greatness is measured in the kingdom of heaven. Those who have all the honor and attention are not the greatest, but those who can offer nothing, who are even a burden to others. These least ones are those who are greater than even John the Baptist.

These least ones are the very ones Jesus speaks of in our text. The blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf, the dead, and the poor. These are the ones who must be attended to. They are a burden, a drain on society. But these are the ones Jesus is caring for. To the blind He gives sight. To the lame He gives the ability to walk. To the lepers the gift of health. To the deaf the ability to hear. To the dead He gives life. And to the poor He gives the good news of the kingdom.

And because Jesus is attending to their needs, because He sees them not as a burden, but as a blessing, these least ones are the very ones who can answer John’s question. They know who Jesus is. They recognize His lordship. They see Him as the Coming One, the Messiah. And it’s because He is the One who has made them whole.

What about you? What has Jesus done for you? If He has done nothing, nothing you can speak of or sing of, then how would you be able to know who He is? It’s why the world does not know Jesus. What has He ever done for them? He gave His life for them on the cross, but do they believe that? If they did, He would mean something to them.

What does Jesus mean to you? If you were great like John the Baptist, you might have doubts about Him. John did. Being great, being honored, receiving all the attention does not mean that you have life all figured out, or even Jesus all figured out. But rather, if you are one who is least, who with the blind and the lame, the lepers and the deaf, have been cared for by Jesus, have been made whole by Him, then you know who Jesus is and you love Him.

As Jesus raised the dead in John’s day, so has He raised you from death to life in your baptism. As Jesus preached the good news to the poor in John’s day, so does He preach the good news of the kingdom into your ears.

Your greatness does not consist in what you do for others, or even for Jesus. It consists in what Jesus has done for you. He counted you of more worth than even His own life. He went to the cross for you not because of what you can do for Him, but because of the value He places upon you, on your eternal soul.

Are there times when you do not act like you even know who He is? You know there are. The world is infectious. It invades our minds and hearts. This does not prevent Jesus from caring for you, from forgiving you and making you whole. He does forgive you, from the greatest of you to the least of you. He forgives you because of who He is, the Coming One, the Messiah. And more, Jesus is your Lord and Savior. Amen.