

The Lord's prophet in the dungeon. John committed no crime. He's in prison for preaching about marriage, Herod's marriage. If there's one thing fallen humanity cannot bear both then, even now, is someone calling on the sexually immoral to repent, preach God's institution for marriage, that will get you attacked.

John knew the end of his life was imminent; it seemed as though the kingdom had failed, and evil people continue to prosper, John sent for a final word from Jesus. John puts it very bluntly, throwing down a gauntlet: Are you the coming One or not? We all want assurance; when it seems we've been abandoned and life isn't right. John knows the answer yet struggling to believe how God is working for his good. And why the Christ isn't doing more? We've been there. He preaches God's truth. But what has that gotten him? Prison, he's going to die. Isn't the coming One supposed to liberate the captives?

Jesus knows better than John what John needs. He is patient, and kind to His impatient children. He does not say, yes, it'll be okay, I have a plan for you, just trust me, I know what I'm doing, eventually you'll be going to a better place, everything will work out. No, He says, **the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news preached to them.**

Jesus directs John- no less you- to Scripture. If John want assurance that Jesus is the Coming One, the Christ, then look to the promises. **Man does not live by bread alone, but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.** Particularly Jesus points him to Isaiah 35. John knows that Scripture, is assured, knows exactly what Jesus is saying without Jesus saying the exact word. What's amazing is what Jesus doesn't say, which John knows comes right before Jesus quoted of Isaiah. You just heard it to. This is it, **Say to those with anxious heart, Be strong, fear not! Behold, you God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God, He will come and save you, then, yes the eyes of the blind, the lame, and so forth.** Jesus is not only giving John the very promise of what the Christ will do but most important thing, **Your God will come and save you. Now.**

The Lord Himself will come and save; He will face the accusations; He will endure the tortures of hell that were due to you in order to spare you and welcome you back to Himself.

That is His glory. Revealed not in shows of might or power nor in healing of lame, blind, even dead raised, but foremost of that list **-the poor have the good news preached to them, the Christ to save.**

Even John, greatest of men and prophets- even you, must be constantly reminded to look there, look! The Scriptures, look at the promises. What exactly is yours. When has He ever failed you? Even John must be reminded the

Lamb, the coming One, comes to be sacrificed for the sins of the world; not to take the world by force. Violence comes upon the Lord. In that violence, violent sacrifice, came peace. Peace, not the absence of war, or an inner tranquility but peace is the fullness of God with you now. That's real peace. The church suffers violence, not because she is violent but because of her husband. As they hated Him, so the world, demons influencing culture, evil men, hate her. For she bears His Name, you baptized bear His name. She proclaims His truth and not offended by Him.

The Coming One -Adam and Eve, suffering Job, thousands of year longed for, now, God enfleshed to save your flesh, that you live in His kingdom that has no end. The prophets, apostles preached it. John preached it, Luther preached it. Luther joins a short list of Biblical preachers who proclaimed the truth in the face of the lie and lived to tell about it. *And take they our life, Goods, fame, child and wife, Let these all be gone, They yet have nothing won; The Kingdom our remaineth.* The Kingdom suffers violence; no one, nothing can prevail against this Kingdom.

What should God have me say to those with anxious hearts? We all languish in various prisons. Prisons of a broken creation, victims of broken bodies and minds, lonely and afraid. But we're not just victims of the 10 comm. You've also lived as if you matter most, and secretly hate; openly gossip and lied about nearly everything. Everyone who sins is a prisoner -of their lust, selfishness, greed. We're not enough close to being as good we think we are. Shame on us all. There should never be a Sunday, that **poor do not have the good news preached to them.** Sins forgiven in His blood, united to His death and life you live now.

We believe, yet we struggle to trust, anxious hearts over many things, especially this time of year; to be sure this is all right, that the Christ is there for you, here for you. To be sure that your God is taking care of things for you. In your struggle to believe and do good, in all your doubts, to address all your brokenness of your prisons, a mind chained to the past; a heart sputtering with rage or grief, imprisoned to your own desires, I've been sent, **say to those with anxious hearts: Be strong, fear not!, Behold, you God will come with vengeance, with the recompense** (to make right all that is wrong) **recompense of God, He will come and save you.** And God baptizes for Himself a people who were no people and sets free the prisoners. Because of the Christ, John was truly not in prison, you too, are free in Christ. Violence always comes against our Lord's people. No prison can hold you. There is no one to condemn you. And no one or nothing can truly harm His own. He is the Coming One who has come for you. Now and always.