

## **Telling the Story**

### **Matthew 11:2-11**

<sup>4</sup> Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.

“Go and tell”, Jesus says to John’s disciples. “Tell what you have seen with your own eyes and what you have heard from the witnesses of these miracles.”

From the very beginning of the Bible, telling the story has been integral to the furthering of God’s story. God tells Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God tells Abraham to go to a foreign country where his lineage will be established. Joseph tells his brothers that what they meant for harm, God had used for good. Moses tells Pharaoh to “let my people go”. Moses then tells the people to tell the story of God’s deliverance to their children. The prophetess Deborah tells Barak that the enemy’s captain will fall into the hands of a woman. The various prophets told the people of Israel that their wanton ways would not go unpunished, but even still God would redeem his people by sending them a Savior.

Before the printed word oral histories were the only way to keep the stories of the past alive. Fathers told their sons, who in turn told their sons, and so on down the line. Telling the story was important so that future generations would know about God, what He had done, and what He promised to do.

At the beginning of the Book of Matthew it had been about 400 years since the last prophet was heard from in the Old Testament. We trust that God's story continued to be told, but after 400 years of silence would people still believe it to be true? As he grew up John would have heard these stories from his father, Zechariah, who was a priest in the Temple. No doubt his mother, Elizabeth, would have told him the story of her meeting with Jesus' mother, Mary, when both women were pregnant.

As a grown man, John went out into the world to tell the story of the coming Messiah. He even introduced Jesus to those gathered at the edge of the Jordan River as the one who was to come. Now, however, John finds his ministry stalled as he sits in prison. Allowed contact with his disciples, he sends them to Jesus to ask if indeed he is the waited Messiah. Had John lost his conviction that Jesus was the one? Most commentaries think not. It is more likely that John sent his followers to Jesus to see and hear firsthand for themselves that Jesus was indeed the one he had prepared the way for and to give them the opportunity to join

Jesus' flock as his ministry had come to an end. John's disciples, along with the disciples of Jesus, would continue to tell the story of God's redeeming, restorative love.

According to Adam Clarke's commentary, this is how the acts of restoration performed by the Messiah would play out:

These miracles were not only the most convincing proofs of the supreme power of Christ, but were also emblematic of that work of salvation which he effects in the souls of men. 1. Sinners are *blind*; their understanding is so darkened by sin that they *see not* the way of truth and salvation. 2. They are *lame*—not able to walk in the path of righteousness. 3. They are *leprous*, their souls are defiled with sin,... *deepening* in themselves, and *infecting* others. 4. They are *deaf* to the voice of God, his word, and their own conscience. 5. They are *dead* in trespasses and sins; God, who is the life of the soul, being separated from it by iniquity. Nothing less than the power of Christ can redeem from all this; and, from *all this*, that power of Christ actually does redeem every penitent believing soul.

Giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead, were signs the ancient rabbins deemed to be works the Messiah would perform, when he appeared in Israel. This was the Gospel for all to tell that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: that he *opens* the *eyes* of the *blind*; enables the *lame* to *walk* with an even, steady, and constant

pace in the way of holiness; *cleanses the lepers* from all the *defilement* of their *sins*; *opens the ears* of the *deaf* to hear his *pardoning words*; and *raises* those who were *dead* in trespasses and sins to *live in union* with himself to all eternity.<sup>1</sup>

This is the same story we are called to tell 2,000 years later. Despite having technology that connects us on a global scale, there are millions of people who have not heard the story of the Christ child, of God come down to live among his people. They have not heard that this same child who preached peace, forgiveness, and justice as a man would choose to die on a cross to ransom our souls for eternal life with Him in heaven.

John's question, "Are you the one?" is for us and the church today. Are you the one to tell the story of God's redemptive love to the family at the food cupboard? Are you the one to tell the story of God's great mercy to the parents at the day care center? Are you the one to tell the story of God's righteous justice to the next-door neighbor? Are you the one to tell the story of God's kingdom here today to a co-worker? Are you the one to tell the story of the greatest gift every given to your new "five-minute friend" in the checkout line at the grocery store? Are you the one?

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Clarke, [\*The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes\*](#), New Edition., vol. 5 (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife Corporation, 2014), 127.

This is the question we need to seriously consider and answer in our own lives. Are we the ones who will speak up and out to tell the story of God's love to the people who need to hear it today? May God grant us the wisdom and courage to do so. AMEN

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