

Sermon for July
Matthew 11

Misunderstandings—they happen all the time. We want to be known, to be accepted, to be understood but throughout a lot of our life we feel that we aren't known or accepted for who we are—we're misunderstood. Jesus knows exactly what that feels like. In the beginning of this chapter that wasn't read today an imprisoned John sends some of his disciples to ask Jesus if he really is the one for whom John was waiting or should they look for another.

You see John was waiting for a Messiah that would come with power to rid Israel of her oppressors; powers of conquest. Jesus comes with deeds of power that are gracious and merciful—healing. Jesus tells John's disciples to tell him what they see—the blind have their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.

Then he addresses the crowd—talk about being fickle. When John comes with his austere ways they shun him and say he has a demon. When Jesus comes and welcomes all proclaiming God's abundant favor they dismiss him by saying that he is a glutton and a drunkard; a friend of tax collectors and sinners! Misunderstood!

He seems to be asking them, "What do you want?" But he knows that they won't answer because what they want is to grow and improve but without having to change anything. But a person can't grow without changing and changing means losing something and it can feel like dying.

Change is scary. Change brings in the unknown. Change is uncertain and risky. We don't know how the change will turn out so we stay the way we are. We stay in failed jobs and relationships because they're what we know and expect.

But that's the difficult truth about living in Christ—you can't do it and expect not to change. Yes, Jesus accepts and loves us as we are, but he doesn't leave us there. When we live a life in Christ we come to realize just how much we need him. To be forgiven is meaningful only to those who admit that they have sinned; for grace to be amazing we need to admit that we are broken; and the promise of eternal life is attractive to those who know they are dying.

We don't like to hear that we have a need. We like to think of ourselves as self-made men and women, so this kind of message has little appeal to us. This message is unbelievably good news to those who can admit they have a need, who know they are broken and who can turn to Jesus to be known, accepted and understood. In Matthew's Gospel faith is simply acknowledging our need and trusting that Jesus can help.

When people ask us how we're doing more likely than not we're going to answer them with fine. And there are a lot of good things in our lives, but there are also hurts, loneliness and disappointments. Think about your life right now and thank God for all that is good in your life. Then take a moment to think about what isn't so good and take it to Jesus. God has entered into this messy life of ours through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God knows our struggles, our pain, and our disappointments and God has promised to heal them and make us whole. This isn't going to happen overnight; sometimes it takes a

life time. But it does happen and it happens when we come together again and again to hear God's Word proclaimed and to receive and taste the Word of God given to us in the holy meal of bread and wine, grace and acceptance.

Jesus' call to us is clear—those who are weary will find rest. Those who feel accused—by others or yourselves will find forgiveness. Those who feel abandoned will find fellowship. Those who feel disappointment will find relief. Those who feel hurt will find healing. And those who feel misunderstood will be known, loved and accepted for who you are.