

Luke 7:29-35 – A people who had not repented

There are many preachers in the world. We have heard many different sermons. Some, we hope, were good. We could find many problems, if we tried. But after it all, our verdict is not the important one. It is God's verdict that matters. After we have said and done everything, he will give the final word. That's what happens in these verses. The people had said what they thought about John, and about Jesus. They had done what they thought best. But after it all, Jesus tells them the mind of God about their own lives.

1. God's spokesmen (v33-34)

Jesus and John were two very different preachers. John was a severe man. He lived in the desert, with wild food and wild clothes. His message was severe: God's wrath is coming, repent now! Return to God's holy law, before his holy anger takes you away! We need to hear that preaching. We live in days when everybody believes that God will give us good things, even though we do not turn from our sins. We need to hear the thunder of John, and repent. Jesus came in another way. He moved around with “sinners” and ate and drank with them. When they invited him, he came, and showed them God's welcome for returning sinners. He did preach repentance (e.g. Luke 13, and here), but also showed God's happiness to forgive (Luke 15:20-24). Have you received this mercy and learnt to be merciful? Not all preachers are the same. We should not reject them if they are different. Rather, we should search for truth, like looking for gold. We should hold on to it, and obey it, wherever it comes from.

2. God's spokesmen rejected (v31-34)

The two preachers had one aim – to bring the people to repentance. John told them about coming wrath; Jesus warmly invited them. Bringing people to God is the aim of true preachers. Have you responded? Most of the Jews had responded with rejection. They looked at John's severe life, and said he was mad – even demonic. Jesus came a different way. He came near to sinners; when they invited him to a feast, he went. He was with bad people – and so they said he was also a bad person. We can be sure he was not a drunkard or glutton (greedy over-eater). But he was accused because of the people he came near to and preached to and loved closely. Jesus said the people were like children in a market-place (v31-32). They wanted God to dance to their tune, and complained when he did not! In Matthew 11:20-24 Jesus said that their judgment would be terrible. How about us; we have heard – have we repented?

3. God's spokesmen vindicated (v35)

Jesus and John were right. Jesus said, “wisdom is shown to be right by her children”. He called on people to look at the results of his preaching. The worst of people were returning to God. The fruits showed that the roots were good. The Pharisees and teachers of the law had never got near to winning these people. What should our aim be? Not to look good or impress others – but to truly love the needy in Jesus' name. We should go where others won't go and win the “nobodies” to Christ. We should not judge by appearance, but by truth. After the people gave their verdicts, Jesus also gave his. At the end of our hearing the gospel, one day Jesus will sit on the throne of judgment and judge us. Excuses are no good. Jesus sees through them. Remember that he is the “friend of sinners” - what a wonderful name! Let us repent and come to him.