

## What More Could You Want?

**Matthew 11:2-11** Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup> and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" <sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. <sup>6</sup> And blessed is the one who is not offended by me." <sup>7</sup> As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? <sup>8</sup> What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. <sup>9</sup> What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup> This is he of whom it is written, "' Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' <sup>11</sup> Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

*In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

1        Once all the Christmas gifts are opened, will you be satisfied? Even if you get everything on your list, will you be satisfied? Of course not. Even if all the shiny new toys, the gadgets, the jewelry, the clothes, the knick-knacks seem to satisfy you for a while, that satisfaction won't even last a year. Next year at this time, you'll have a new list of things that will satisfy you for another 11 months. How does that make you as a giver of gifts feel, knowing that your gift will at best only provide enjoyment for 11 months, or at worst, will be discarded, broken, or used up by December 26<sup>th</sup>?

2        As frustrating as it might be to give gifts to people, how much more frustrating is it to give gifts to God? If you think it's difficult to find gifts for the guy or girl who has everything, what do you give to the one who created everything? Well, Jesus makes the list of His wants pretty clear: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind." So you offer these things to Him who created them. But you can't give God your whole heart or you'll have no affection left over for the gifts you will receive or the people who give them. And you can't give Him all your soul because who knows what that means anyway. You can't love Him with all your strength because you've got to save some strength for your

everyday work. And you can't love Him with all your mind because then you'll seem strange to those around you.

3 When these gifts don't work, you resolve to look farther down God's list of things He wants. Maybe you settle for some works, hoping that these will appease Him for a while. You come to church; you try to be a good spouse; you work at being a good parent. You try to drink less and clean up your language. You try to obey your parents more. What more could He want? But all these works won't satisfy the Lord; His standards for gifts that please Him are much higher: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." It won't work to keep just one—or a few—of the Commandments. And it won't work to keep them all for just a short period of time. God demands perfection, and your imperfect gifts of your works will only insult Him.

4 The truth is, you simply can't afford the gifts your Lord wants. He wants perfection. And you're not just a little bit imperfect, you're the opposite of perfect. You're born sinful and you sin daily, hourly. You're not just a little bit short of being able to afford this gift that would please the Lord. You're bankrupt, dirt-poor. So repent of thinking you could please God on your own.

5 John the Baptist sent his followers to Jesus that they might hear for themselves the answer John already knew. "Are you the One who is to come, or shall we look for another?" "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them." These are impressive works. They are wonderful gifts. Jesus gave sight to the blind, function to the lame, cleansing to the lepers, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead. What more could you want? Clearly, this Jesus is a prophet unlike any other. He fulfills these prophecies about the Messiah. What more could they want?

6 Prophets before Jesus had worked miracles, but none like these. Moses turned water to blood, but Jesus turned water to wine. Elisha struck his unfaithful servant with leprosy; Jesus cured the lepers. Elijah called down fire from heaven to destroy 100 soldiers and their 2 captains; Jesus rebuked the disciples when they sought to call down fire from heaven to destroy the people who opposed Him. Peter cut off Malchus' ear when he came to arrest Jesus; Jesus healed Malchus and went peacefully with His captors. The other miracles demonstrated God's wrath; Jesus' miracles demonstrate God's mercy. They heal bodies and give life. What more could you want?

7 The ministry of Jesus is to preach this good news to the poor. You who were so poor you couldn't even afford one gift that would have pleased God, hear this good news. Jesus came healing bodies and giving life. But he did so at the expense of one body: His own. This prophet like none other, this Divine Son of God, this mysterious union of God and man, came not just to heal temporal diseases and to give temporal gifts. These gifts last only a short while. The ones He healed, the ones He raised to life, still died. Their temporal healing couldn't fix the root cause of their dying: sin. So the Lord Jesus took the poverty of their sin and of your sin upon Himself. And He went to the cross to be punished for all the world's sin. This is the good news preached to you who are spiritually poor.

8 Your gifts to God count for nothing. What counts is this sacrifice: the death of Jesus in your place. He was the one perfect as His heavenly Father is perfect. And yet He died on the cross. Only He was worthy to offer a gift pleasing to the Father, and so he did. And in doing so, in offering His life in exchange for yours, He offers you a gift, as well. Hear the good news, you poor in spirit: the Lord requires nothing of you. You can't save yourself, your works offered to Him don't make the Lord happy. He gives you the precious gift of faith. What more could you want?

9 All other gifts you'll ever receive will leave you disappointed. But your Lord lavished gifts upon you like no others. He gave you faith and the righteousness of Christ in the waters of Holy Baptism. He gives you forgiveness of sins in Holy Absolution. He gives you His body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of your sins. This is good news preached to you who were poor before you received these treasures. Forgiveness, life, and salvation are yours. What more could you want?

*In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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