

Matthew 11:12-19 ESV

Is Your Reaction Right?

Services: Sunday, 10/29 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, 10/30 at 7 PM

Church Year: Reformation Day (Observed)

The 500th Anniversary, 1517 – 2017

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: This Tuesday, **October 31, 2017**, is the **500th anniversary of the reformation!** What does that mean? On **October 31, 1517**, Dr. Luther, *a Roman Catholic priest and university professor*, nailed his 95 theses (statements) to the door of the Wittenberg Catholic Church; Luther wanted to spark a theological debate for the purpose of returning his church, *the Roman Catholic Church*, back to the saving truth of God's Holy Word! Dr. Luther expected his statements to be well-received, *and they were by many*, but not by most leaders in his church body.

This is a summary of today's gospel reading: **"The trend of the entire discourse deals, not with violence against the kingdom, but with the **indifference** and the **dissatisfaction** that hinder men from entering it with zest"** (Lenski, 437). *What about us, do we have a WHATEVER-type attitude about the kingdom?* John was sent to the people *with a strong call to repent*, while Jesus came *with an amazing display of love*, yet sadly both were rejected by many 😞. That same reaction was given *way before Jesus' time* and *way after* as well:

- **OT**: Own version of the truth – *so they rejected the prophets.*
- **NT**: Own version of the truth – *so they rejected John and Jesus.*
- **Middle Ages**: Own version of the truth – *so they rejected Luther.*

The pattern: If you don't like the message, *kill the messenger!*

1. **The Kingdom of the Heavens:**

- a. Force and force: ¹² **“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of [the] heavens [is brought with force], and [forceful people seize it].”**
- i. Brought with force: **✦with the preaching of John** – who said to the crowds, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Luke 3:7 ESV), and **✦with the preaching of Jesus** – who proclaimed, “...the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15 ESV).
 - ii. Seized with force: In other words: When the Spirit gets ahold of a person, *his life is radically transformed!* Think about Paul and Martin Luther, even you and me: “...if any man is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor. 5:17 NAS).
- b. Many spoke boldly: ¹³ **“For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, ¹⁴ and if you are willing to [receive] it, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵ He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”**
- i. The OT prophets: Not only John and Jesus spoke boldly, but, *for centuries*, the LORD sent His prophets to call the people to repent – *to be sorry for their sins and receive the promised Messiah!*

- ii. John – Elijah: The LORD said through the prophet Malachi, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes” (4:5 ESV). Then Jesus identified John as *the Elijah-type prophet who was promised*. “Real hearing called for faith...” (TLSB, 1602). So those who received John and his message *had functioning spiritual ears!* The same was true for *the people who received God’s truth taught by Luther!*

2. **The Many Who Heard God’s Truth:** ¹⁶ “But to what shall I compare this generation?” // What generation? The people living “from the days of John the Baptist until now...” Jesus was actually talking to those very people, *and they were not ignorant*; they knew about John and Jesus; however, *they rejected them* 😞!
- a. They wanted it their way: Then Jesus explained what He meant: “It is like [young] children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, ¹⁷ ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge [funeral song], and you did not mourn.’” // This was the attitude of the people: LORD, *You become what we want, and don’t expect us to become what You want!* This phrase in the book of Judges describes the result of *unchecked sin*: “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (21:25 ESV).
- b. Here are two examples: Notice how John was at one extreme and Jesus at the other:

- i. John: ¹⁸ “**For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’**” // This generation wanted eating and drinking, so, *not getting what they wanted from John*, they slandered him ☹!
- ii. Jesus: ¹⁹ “**The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’**” // So, after John, *Jesus came eating and drinking*, but He was condemned and crucified ☹!
- iii. Summary statement: “**What they demanded of John they condemned in Jesus; what they condemned in John they demanded of Jesus**” (Lenski, 443).

Conclusion: Jesus concluded with this statement: “**Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.**” // In other words, “**What a person does demonstrates wisdom**” (TLSB, 1602). For the true prophets, for John, for Jesus, for Martin, and for others, they showed themselves to be wise as they spoke and lived God’s truth! They strongly emphasized sin and condemnation, **but they even more strongly emphasized God’s gifts of forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus!**

Let us pray: Dear Father in heaven, we thank You for opening the spiritual eyes of many through the extensive writing, preaching, and teaching of Dr. Luther! Keep us and all believers *ever-sorry for our sins and ever-trusting alone in Jesus’ finished work!* In His Holy Name, we pray...