

Third Sunday in Advent – 2022

Saturday, 12/10 at 4:00 & Sunday, 12/11 at 9:00

Christ-Follower Checklist



Text: Matthew 11:2-15 NAS 1995

Advent Wednesdays: Services at 11 & 7; Free Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends: *Let's get serious about following the Christ!* In this sermon, based on **Matthew 11:2-15**, we will identify 10 key qualities of a follower of Christ.

As I go through the list, write a **1**, **2**, or **3** next to each item:

- ➔ 1 = *I'm doing good!*
- ➔ 2 = *I want to improve!*
- ➔ 3 = *I want a major change!*

Let's understand what's going on:

- Last week's reading: John the Baptizer was preparing the way for Jesus – *preaching and baptizing*.
- Beyond last week's reading: The ministries of John and Jesus overlapped: ♦ John preaching and baptizing, ♦ Jesus calling disciples, teaching, and doing miracles.
- Today's reading: John is in prison and seeking assurance about Jesus' identity.

Now, the 10 key qualities of a follower of Christ:

1. **Be Sure of Jesus' Identity:** **2** *Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word*

by his disciples ³ and said to [Jesus], “Are You the Expected One [the One promised long ago to Adam and Eve and mentioned throughout the OT], or shall we look for someone else?” // Opinions about Jesus are mixed:

- a. He was a good teacher or a prophet of God.
- b. He stirred up trouble and had no connection to God.
- c. He is the Son of God and promised Savior of the world.

2. **Rely on Tangible Proof:** ⁴ Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ *the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.*

- a. John’s disciples SAW: ♣the blind seeing, ♣the lame walking, ♣the lepers being clean, and ♣the dead living.
- b. John’s disciples HEARD: Sweet words of release from the dungeon of sin, despair, and death.

3. **Never Be Offended by Jesus:** ⁶ **And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.** // Think about John:

- a. So HIGH in his calling, *yet so low in his living, clothing, and eating*. Then he was thrown into a miserable prison – *all because he persisted in telling the truth!*
- b. John could have thought, *I gave up EVERYTHING for nothing!* I thought I was going to serve with Jesus, but now He is serving, and I am in this rotten place.
- c. Whenever we are down about following Jesus, let us remember ♣God’s love and forgiveness, ♣our membership in His kingdom, and ♣our awesome eternity. Then, let us never give up, *no matter what!*

4. **Never Bend to Popular Opinion:** ⁷ **As these men were going *away*, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?”** // *Corrupt politicians and false teachers bend and twist the truth, but not John! Christ-followers tell the truth, regardless of the consequences!*
5. **Never Pursue an Easy Life:** ⁸ **“But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft *clothing*? Those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings' palaces!”** // John was characterized by toughness – tough clothes, tough food, and tough preaching. He did not seek an easy life, *but a God-honoring life! Let us be like John!*
6. **Speak the Word of God:** ⁹ **“But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet.”** ¹⁰ **This is the one about whom it is written, ‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’”** // God’s prophets were moved by God to speak His word. We can do the same by learning, and then accurately sharing God’s word with others.
7. **Seek First God’s Kingdom:** ¹¹ **“Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen *anyone* greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”**
- a. John was the greatest – *because he was chosen to prepare the way for Jesus.*
 - b. We are greater than John – *because we know about Jesus’ sacrificial dying and glorious rising! John had some idea about what was coming, but we have the Biblical account. So let us put God first in everything!*

8. **Be Unstoppable:** On Jan. 24, 1848, James Marshall found gold in CA, which triggered the California Gold Rush; about 300,000 people hurried to California! In a similar way, John's ministry triggered many to hurry to John – not for gold, but for forgiveness and membership in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² **“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.** // When the HS revealed the value of the kingdom of heaven, many were unstoppable in obtaining it! Since we know nothing is more important, let us also be unstoppable!
9. **Heed John's Call:** ¹³ **For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John** [that is, the OT kept telling the truth and pointing ahead to the Messiah]. ¹⁴ **And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.** // The end of the OT, at the end of *Malachi*, is about the coming of Elijah. Let us be certain that ♣John is the promised Elijah-like prophet of God and ♣Jesus is the promised Savior of the world.
10. **Hear, Think, Repent:** ¹⁵ **He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”** // God is talking, but are we ♣hearing, ♣thinking, and ♣understanding; then, are we ♣turning from our sins, ♣trusting in Jesus for eternal life, and ♣seeking to follow His will for our lives? *I hope so!*

Let Us Pray: Lord Jesus, since we know it is best to fully follow You, help us to ☞examine today's checklist, ☞repent wherever necessary, and ☞seize every opportunity to live for You in our daily lives!

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