

**"Blessed Are Those Who Take Jesus At His Word"  
Luke 7:19-23**

Funeral Sermon for

**J. Art Serratos**

3 August Anno Domini 2001  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Emmett, Idaho

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Grace, mercy and peace to you in the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

Dear Leona, Kristy, Kathi, Art's many family members, friends, neighbors, and members of the  
Family of God at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church,

What a prison he found himself in ... this man who could sure do some powerful talking! He couldn't  
get up and walk out the door any longer ... this man who seemed to be able to speak with just about  
everyone around him. What a bondage it was for such a man who was so used to going here and  
there, and speaking to this and that person. And for those who knew him, well they looked on what  
he had been and now saw what had happened to him, it just didn't seem like it should happen this  
way. And for the many, many people who had ever heard him, and now could hear him no more, it  
certainly was a sad, miserable situation.

So, as John lay in this prison, on what would be his last earthly bed, there were concerns in his mind  
about God ... questions, even doubts about who Jesus really was. He pondered a matter of great  
importance concerning this cousin of his ... Is Jesus of Nazareth the Christ of God, the promised  
Messiah, the long-awaited Savior?

The Biblical text for the sermon at the funeral of Art Serratos is Luke 7:19-23. Please listen to that  
portion of Scripture under the theme ...

... "Blessed Are Those Who Take Jesus At His Word"

"And John, calling to him two of his disciples, sent them to the Lord, saying, 'Are you He Who is to  
come, or shall we look for another?' And when the men had come to Him, they said, 'John the  
Baptist has sent us to You, saying, "Are you He Who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" In  
that hour He (Jesus) cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were  
blind He bestowed sight. And He answered them, 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard:  
the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised  
up, the poor have Good News preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offense at Me.'"

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

John the Baptizer, cousin of Jesus, voice in the wilderness, prophet of God, forerunner of the LORD, was in Herod's prison with the real possibility of death coming at any moment. John wondered if Jesus was the Christ promised in the Old Testament. Jesus, "are you the One Who is coming, or should we look for another?" He couldn't ask the question himself so he sent two others and they asked Jesus the question: "Are you the One Who is coming, or should we look for another?"

The Son of God answers by referring to Old Testament promises ... ones that would be fulfilled when the promised Christ came to redeem the world. Isaiah the prophet spoke and wrote to a people who were living in a land of death and communicated to them that when the Savior arrived there would be astounding miracles ... He would heal the deaf so they could hear the Words of a Book and give sight to the eyes of the blind so they would see the Savior. The poor, that is those whose only hope is in God, would exult in the Holy One of Israel (29:18-19). The lame would be able to walk on the highway that is called the Holy Way (35:6-8). The Good News of salvation would be told to those who are afflicted when the Redeemer would bind up the broken-hearted and proclaim liberty to the captives (61:1).

And as we read the Bible, we discover that this is exactly what Jesus did and especially what He was doing when the disciples of John came, for "in that hour He cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind He bestowed sight." Jesus turns to the two disciples of John and tells them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the Good News preached to them." In short, go and tell John that while he remains locked up, the One Whom he is waiting for, has come. Go and tell John that I am the Christ.

Please note that Jesus does not make it happen so that John is released from prison. In fact, the LORD permits His cousin to remain locked up and awaiting martyrdom. And alas, one day, at the request of an adulteress, John is beheaded. Well then, what in the world had Jesus given to John? Nothing ... but His Word. "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard." Think about what this means! Everyone else gets the miracle ... diseases healed, blind seeing, lepers cleansed, deaf hearing, even the dead are raised. What does John get? He gets Jesus' Word. God could have prevented John's death from happening ... and He didn't. Jesus sent His Word of hope to John and that was sufficient. John was not offended, but rather took Jesus at His Word and as Jesus declared, "blessed is he who takes no offense Me."

But wait a minute, this funeral sermon really isn't about John, for he died trusting in Christ, that is, having taken Jesus at His Word. John the Baptizer is alive and well with the LORD in Paradise. So the practical application of the sermon really must be with someone other than John.

Well, let us direct our attention to Art the Baptized, usher of the Church, talker on the CB, a son of God, a father of two daughters, a defender of the nation, a man for whom Christ gave His Life, husband of Leona, a man whom the LORD received, a man gifted to gab, a lawman, a Gospel man, a recipient of God's grace, a grandfather, one whom God chose and called His own, a guy who drove himself to the hospital during a heart attack, a guy whose heart was cleansed by Christ. That's Art, and each of you has memories and stories and accounts that you will think of and chuckle about ... not only at this moment but also in the hours and days ahead.

Art was a man who greeted people at the door of the Church and handed out funeral bulletins just

like these ... except, of course, the bulletins did not have the name of J. Art Serratos on the top. For you must understand that, until today, the bulletins always had the names of other members of God's Family at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church on them, people who remained faithful unto death and who died in Christ. Art was a faithful member of the Church here. Now he is a faithful member of the Church there.

Does that mean that Art didn't have questions and doubts during this life? No, it doesn't mean that at all. When his right side weakened, he wondered what was happening. When he was getting ready to be taken to surgery, he didn't know what the outcome was going to be. Was the LORD coming for him on that day, or would the LORD wait for another day? Art didn't know. None of us did. Only God knew what would be.

Well, in the midst of all the uncertainty of this life, with his physical strength waning - in the frustration of not being able to speak - as the tumor's tentacles fingered into his brain - with the surgeon's knife approaching ... what in the world did Art have? The same thing that John the Baptizer had - only Jesus' Word.

For it was in 1932, when Art was an infant, that he first heard the Word of God in his Baptism ... "John Art Serratos, I baptize you in the Name of the Father and of the ( ) Son and of the Holy Ghost" ... and blessed is he who takes no offense" in these words of Jesus. This Invocation is the same Word that Art heard in the last few weeks of his life ... when he had no more ability to think, comprehend or reason than he did when he was a baby nearly 69 years ago.

Throughout his life, Art only had Jesus' Word ... that Jesus is the Christ Who has come into this world to atone for the sins of every man, woman, youth, child and infant who ever has, who is, and/or who ever will live ... present company included. Art trusted in the LORD, that is, in "the Word become flesh and dwelling among us" (John 1:14) and Who said that He "came not to be served but to serve, and to give His Life as a Ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). And "blessed is he who takes no offense" in these words of Jesus. Through the eyes of faith, Art saw his Savior pinned to the cross for the sake of all people and he heard Jesus petition, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34) and he heard the Good News of an accomplished, complete salvation when the old, rugged Christ cried out at the ninth hour, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). And "blessed is he who takes no offense" in Jesus ... in Who He is, in what He has done, in what He is doing, in what He will do, or in His Word.

Throughout the years Art feasted at the Holy Communion as he continued to take the Lord at His Word ... Who said, "This is My Body, given for you; This is My Blood, shed for you for the remission of sins" and indeed, "blessed is he who takes no offense" in these words of Jesus. Through the Word of God's gracious love, the LORD granted Art the gift of faith to trust in Him and to remain faithful unto death and be given the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

Now ... some may grumble at this, for they reason that although Jesus could have, He did not make it happen, that Art was healed in this life. In fact, we know that the LORD permitted the tumor to grow and to consume Art's body. Someone else gets the miracle ... someone else has a successful surgical removal of a tumor, some other guy has radiation treatments that work, some woman is cured here, some man is cured there ... but not Art.

Well, what in the world did Jesus give Art then? Nothing, except His Word. Although unable to receive the Sacrament for months, Art now partakes of the on-going Feast at the Banqueting Table prepared by Christ, Who is "the Resurrection and the Life" (John 11:25) and Who promises, "because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19) and Who has said, "I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:4). Art was not offended, but rather took Jesus at His Word, and as Jesus declared, "blessed is he who takes no offense Me."

But wait a minute, this funeral sermon really isn't about Art, for he died in faith, having taken Jesus at His Word. While Art's mortal remains will soon be commended to the earth, be assured that this dear soul is with Christ. The tumor is dead while Art the Baptized is alive and well with the LORD in Paradise. So, the practical application of this sermon really must be with someone other than John ... someone other than Art.

Who might that someone be? Well, let's see. It will be someone who is still here in this world ... who is still breathing the air of this atmosphere. It could be someone who has a tumor and knows it, or it could be someone who has a tumor and doesn't know it. It could be someone who has fifty years to live or mere minutes left. That someone might be like John who met a sudden, violent death; or like Art who slowly succumbed to a spreading malignancy. You? Perhaps. Me? Perhaps. Truly, only God knows who among us will be next ... only the LORD knows the day and the hour that any one of us will take our last breath in this life.

So what have we got going here that will carry us into heaven? You and I can't get the job done. Our good works do not earn it, for salvation is a gift from God. The best of our intentions fall short of the Glory of God Who grants Paradise without you paying the price, "for by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Truly, we must leave both our good works and our sins behind as we approach that Day.

What do you then? Really, you only have God's Word of Life in a world of death. Jesus was bound to a cross that He might bind-up the broken-hearted in His soul-soothing forgiveness. Christ was condemned for all that you might be pardoned of all your sins. Jesus' feet were pierced that the lame might walk for eternity. The Son of God closed His eyes in death that yours might be opened in Life. The Father forsook the Son that you might be declared a son of God. Jesus was plagued that you might be eternally cleansed of all your diseases. Before He died for you, Jesus went through hell that you would be with Him in heaven at the moment of your death.

"Blessed Are Those Who Take Jesus At His Word."

So someone, on the 3rd day of August in the year of our Lord 2001, entered a building located on Main Street, Emmett, Idaho. That person stepped into a large room in order to attend the funeral service of a husband, a father, a grandfather, a brother, a family member, a friend, a neighbor, a fellow member of the Church, of a man named Art Serratos. And while sitting on a padded pew, that person heard, in addition to Art's confession of the faith, ... well, that person heard what Jesus said one day nearly 2,000 years ago, "blessed is he who takes no offense at Me."

Indeed, "Blessed Are Those Who Take Jesus At His Word."

And to those of you who have taken this Word of hope to heart, please know this: You are forgiven of all your sins in the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.