

## **When Jesus Singles You Out**

*Series by Cooper Atkeson*

### **When Jesus Singles You Out – The Scribe**

Not everything Jesus did and said has been recorded for us. “Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (Jn 21:25, ESV). So when Biblical authors make effort to record a distinct comment Jesus made about an individual, it is worth our attention. Why did Jesus single them out?

Jesus said of a scribe in Mark 12:34, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” Please understand the weight of this statement. When Jesus says this we ought to very well know what He is talking about! The scribe had previously asked Jesus which is the most important commandment. When Jesus gave the answer, the scribe agreed saying, “To love Him...and to love one’s neighbor... is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” It was to this rationale that Jesus said, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” This is not to disparage the Law of Moses. Jesus is saying that love is greater than method or ritual. The heart is “much more” important than the mechanics. When we believe this, Jesus can say of us, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

### **When Jesus Singles You Out – Nathanael**

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Jesus said of Nathanael in John 1:47, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” What an honor to be complimented by the Master in such a way! Nathanael had just questioned the news that the Messiah had come from Nazareth by saying, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael didn’t beat around the bush – he called it as he saw it. At the least he was simply voicing what everyone else was thinking. At the worst, he was being honest about his prejudice. It was this straight talk that Jesus praised, calling him “an Israelite indeed” or “a true Israelite.” The speech of a true Israelite is bold - more honest than modest, and more personally direct than politically correct. When we avoid the deceit of passive talk, Jesus can compliment us saying, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!”

### **When Jesus Singles You Out – The Centurion**

Not everything Jesus did and said has been recorded for us. “Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (Jn 21:25, ESV). So when Biblical authors make effort to record a distinct comment Jesus made about an individual, it is worth our attention. Why did Jesus single them out?

Jesus said of a centurion in Luke 7:9, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” Jesus had an entourage of disciples but it was this Roman commander – this Gentile - that had the more notable faith. How? He believed in the power and authority of Jesus. By Luke 7 In the literature, Jesus had cast out demons, rebuked fevers, commanded health, and forgiven sins – all by his word. Many of His disciples had witnessed these things, but it was the centurion that demonstrated his faith in Jesus’ word by saying, “...say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man set under authority... and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes....” It was this faith that was greater than the faith of any Israelite. A great faith is one that chooses to unreservedly trust Jesus and His word – to take His promises and teachings at face value and live into them. Jesus notes when such a faith is present.

### **When Jesus Singles You Out – Mary**

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Jesus said of a woman in Matthew 24:10, 13 (whom we know to be Mary), “She has done a beautiful thing for me...wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.” It would be hard to draw more attention to Mary than these explicit words by Jesus. Mary had just poured a flask of luxurious ointment on the Lord’s head. What was so special about that? Why was this worth telling the world for ages to come? Was it because it was such an expensive gift? No. Jesus said that “she has done it to prepare me for burial.” Jesus had just told His disciples that He would die. How crushing this would’ve been to Mary! In love, she offered what she could in the moment. With His death imminent, it may have appeared to have been a small or meaningless gesture – but it was “a beautiful thing.” When we love Jesus and desire to please Him, even the small things He appreciates.

### **When Jesus Singles You Out – Children**

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Jesus said of children in Luke 18:16-17, “Let the children come to me... for to such belongs the kingdom of God...whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” If we are to live as a part of the kingdom of God then we should be as those who are receiving that kingdom. In Luke, people were bringing infants to Jesus. In what way does an infant receive anything? They cry in discomfort even though they don’t know the solution, but they do recognize their mother and know that she is the source of comfort. An infant totally relies on their mother. In the same way, we should rely on Jesus, desiring Him completely and Him alone, “for to such belongs the kingdom of God.”

### **When Jesus Singles You Out – John the Baptist**

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Jesus said of John the Baptist in Luke 7:28, “...among those born of women none is greater than John,” a definitive statement. In the image of the great prophet Elijah, John was prophesized to come and prepare the way for the Messiah. Jesus would say John was “more than a prophet” in that his was a grand task – to prepare the way for Messiah and His kingdom. However, John died before this kingdom was ushered in. Therefore, Jesus said, “Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” Are we greater than John the Baptist? Yes! We are living in the kingdom right now! We have the entire revealed word of God. We have the indwelling Spirit. We are the bride of Christ. These are things that John did not have. Jesus has singled *us* out. We have blessing and privilege that no other people on Earth have ever enjoyed – to the extent that even the least among us are greater than John the Baptist, himself.