

***Matthew 11:2-11.***

***When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples <sup>3</sup> to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" <sup>4</sup> Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. <sup>6</sup> Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." <sup>7</sup> As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? <sup>8</sup> If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. <sup>9</sup> Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup> This is the one about whom it is written: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' <sup>11</sup> I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.***

When in doubt, go to Jesus.

1. Lay your troubles at his feet.
2. Be assured of his love and care.

*(This sermon is being preached in the first person perspective  
as if one of John's disciples is speaking)*

It was a time of great uncertainty for us. John was in prison and he wouldn't get out. I can remember how the other disciples and I felt: so deflated, so empty, so helpless and confused. We thought we had found a great teacher. We thought John was going to change the world. He was going to wake people up. We were convinced that he was going to open the eyes of the leaders of the Jewish leaders and all the people with them. He was going to humble the proudest of men with his message of repentance, and people were going to change. John was going to change the world and I was going to be right there with him.

That's how all of us disciples thought; especially when we were in his presence. There never seemed to be any doubt with John. When he spoke there didn't seem to be any fear, any hesitation. When he proclaimed the message of repentance, when he called those Pharisees and Sadducees a "brood of vipers" - oh who could forget their faces when he called them that. John was fearless, brave, he seemed unstoppable. He was confident and that confidence was contagious; because he was convinced we were convinced.

We followed this great man, who stood out as being so different, he was clearly a man sent from God. And so when he was put in jail we were so confused. It didn't make any sense. If John spoke for God, if he prepared the way for the Messiah, if he was this man of God, why was he silenced? It led us to doubt, well, everything. But even in this time of uncertainty, John, was able to teach us another important lesson.

We were lost, searching for answers, and I will never forget what John did. He sent us to Jesus. John had pointed to Jesus as the Son of God. John had told us that this was the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. And when John found out what Christ was doing while he sat in prison, John sent us to ask him, ***“Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”***

At first, hearing this question come for our teacher's lips it sounded like John was confused too, and maybe he was. He was a great man, but he was just a man, after all. Maybe sitting in Herod's prison cell had left him to question himself, his ministry, his message, even his very purpose in life! After all, he was supposed to be this great forerunner and he had done his job, but for what. He had called the people to repentance. He had called the leaders, even Herod to turn from their sin. He had spoken about the Messiah as one who would bring judgment, as one whose ax was already at the root of the tree! But now John sat in prison and the wicked seemed to be winning. Where was the judgment?! Why was it, that evil seemed to be winning, and God and his will and his messenger seem to be ignored?!

To this day, however, I am convinced that John sent us out to Jesus more for our benefit than his. John was a man of great faith. He firmly believed that Jesus was the Savior, he may have had his doubts but we... we were clearly rattled. And so he sent us out to see Jesus for ourselves. He sent us out so that we could be convinced that this was the promised Messiah and our hope was in Jesus, the Christ. As John sent us out he sent us to ask Jesus this simple question. ***“Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”*** We were able to see for ourselves that Jesus was clearly the Messiah, the Christ, the chosen one, whom God had sent to save us. His actions spoke for themselves. Who else could cure the blind, the deaf, the lame, and the leprous?! Who else could raise the dead from the grave?! He was the one whom Isaiah had foretold, the one who would bind up the broken hearted, perform divine acts of healing, and preach the good news to the poor. Jesus was the Christ promised of old, he was the son of God sent from heaven. Jesus would pay for the sins of the whole world and he would give us eternal life, and he preached this good news to poor sinners who needed a Savior!

John sent us to Jesus, we brought our concerns to him, and we came back strengthened and assured. Our confidence was restored, our uncertainties and doubts faded away, and we stood again on solid ground. We were renewed in our mission, our ministry, and our very purpose in life. We were built up and encouraged. And we were then able to encourage each other.

From what I understand things are not much different in this day and age. The things that occur in this world on a daily basis make you sad and confused. There are many who display a general indifference to God while a growing number are becoming more vocal in their attacks of our beliefs, and it all can leave you shaken. You ask questions that are similar to the type that we were asking when John was put in prison. In sin and weakness sinners will always respond with the same type of doubts and thoughts of frustration. "Why does evil seem to prevail while obedience to the true God is marginalized or even punished?" "Why do bad things happen to good people?" "Where is the justice and judgment God promised?" And all of this can suddenly pile up as the troubles and trials of the day try to smother your faith with uncertainty and drive you down into confusion.

Well, I am here today to give you the same advice that the great John the Baptist gave to me. *When in doubt go to Jesus.* When you are faced with difficulties and uncertainties bring them to your Savior. Go to Jesus for answers and assurance. He is the only one who saves you. He is the one who gives you joy and purpose and meaning. He is the one who gives you the confidence to serve our Lord. For Jesus alone is the Christ. He will bring judgment on this earth, but in these days leading up to the last day the Lord Jesus deals with the people of this world with such divine and undeserved compassion. Jesus, the one who reached out with hands of healing to the blind, the lame, the deaf, and the leprous; reaches out still today with the good news of salvation. In compassion he is patient with the sinner, he is patient with disobedient. And in his wisdom he challenges and tests those who he has brought to faith so that we might grow stronger. He does this not to be unfair, or dishearten, or frustrate us, but he does this so that we might stand firm, and stand out, like John did. He leaves us in this world to encourage one another in the faith and to bring others to Jesus. I didn't really understand that until I was able to talk to Jesus, but then he spoke these words that would stick with me forever, ***"Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."***

Patience, perseverance, character, and confidence, in this life that is filled with such uncertainty and impatience, these are spiritual blessings that the LORD wants us to have. But such virtues don't come easy. Instead of caving to doubts and fear when troubles and trials wear on us we are to regularly rush to Jesus and lay our burdens at his feet. Look to his loving compassion and find forgiveness and hope, healing and strength, in our Lord and Savior. Jesus was the one chosen to carry your burden of sin to the cross. He was the one who was born to save you and strengthen you. He is the one who sustains you through life's troubles and gives you unparalleled hope as he walks with you towards the joy of eternal life. In Christ you are renewed in your mission, your ministry, and your very purpose in life.

We are built up in Christ and encouraged so that we may encourage each other. When in doubt we go to Jesus and we see the price he was willing to pay for us and it

is awe inspiring and hope renewing; the glory he gave up for a time to humbly serve our needs; the patience he demonstrates in reaching out to sinners; the love he showed by being nailed to a cross to suffer in our place; he made himself the least so that we might share in the fullness of his glory. He lived and died and rose again to secure for us eternal joy and peace. All of this leads us to trust in him as he guides us through this bleak wilderness of life. He sustains us through the temporary troubles of this life and he blesses us with the support of fellow believers so that we may learn from each other, and encourage each other.

Like brother James mentioned in his letter we learned a whole lot about patience and perseverance through the example of Job. It was the Lord's will that Job's life would be so severely impacted by suffering and pain but his faithful endurance would serve to strengthen millions upon millions of believers throughout the centuries. As they dealt with tragedy and loss they could look to Job's faith in his Redeemer and how that faith was eventually rewarded with more than he could have ever asked for. It was also the Lord's will that John, this one of a kind man, would faithfully serve the Lord with boldness and confidence even in the face of such adversity, so that we too could be encouraged to boldly serve our Lord and to step out in faith and share Jesus with courage and confidence.

John the Baptist was a great man. He taught me so much. But this simple lesson that came forth during such a difficult time is one of the greatest lessons that he ever taught me: *when in doubt go to Jesus*. When you lay your troubles at his feet Jesus is there to assure you of his love and care. Jesus is there to strengthen you so that you may serve him with confidence and joy. For just as you wait with joy and eager expectation of another celebration of Christ's birth so also may you wait with joy and patience for the day when Christ returns. On that day the troubles of this life will be gone and you will celebrate Christ in the perfection of heaven for all eternity. So dear friends in Christ Jesus, I leave you with this; when you have your doubts, when you battle the trials and struggles of life, when your faith is put to the test remember to go to Jesus. Lay your troubles at his feet and be assured of his love and care. May the peace and joy of Christ Jesus be with you now and always. Amen.