

Matthew 11:1-11

The Dungeon of Doubt

Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.
2 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples 3 and said to Him, “**Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?**”

So this past Tuesday I had a meeting to attend in Costa Mesa.

A) So I left the church here at 10am headed down the 5 FWY for my 11am meeting in CM

B) I usually can make it there in about an hour.

C) My car becomes my office – Bluetooth – catch up on calls

Now I have to mention – I grew up in OC and am very familiar with the area – drive 1,000’s of times

A) Usually I have someone with me and I am in the carpool lane.

B) Which is great because when the 5FWY merges with the 405 FWY you can stay in the carpool lane

C) This time I am alone – no carpool lane – on the phone with a Pastor in Colorado

D) I completely missed where I was to merge on to the 405 FWY

E) Seeing signs for the city of Orange that it hits me I am not where I am supposed to be

F) Anyone else ever do that?

I think we have all ended up someplace that we were not supposed to be due to our own stupidity – right?

A) But what about when you end up some place that seems like the wrong place – God put you there

B) Have you ever had things in your life not turn out the way that you thought? Way Worse?

C) Job opportunity ? Relationship -Move to a new neighborhood ? -Embarking in a new ministry?

1) You were thinking God was going to do ABC and he ended up doing XYZ

I have – many times!/ AND I have had some things that have happened in my life –

A) That has left me scratching my head.

B) Other times where I thought things were going to go one way – ended up completely another way.

1) To this day – I don’t understand – mystery

C) Those are parts of my life that I know I probably will never understand until I get to heaven.

But when things don’t go the way that we think they were going to go—it can leave us disappointed w/ God

A) It can cause us to even doubt! – Doubt God

B) Or to Doubt if we are clearly hearing him and being led by him.

C) Today we find John the B in a similar place – that I call his dungeon of doubt

D) He has been doing everything that God called him to do – he ends up in a Prison cell

When we consider John the Baptist and his ministry, I think John would be the first to say: This didn’t turn out the way I thought it was going to

A) Unique calling – Mother Barren – Miraculous pregnancy

B) Calling to be the advance man of the Messiah – all of that was exciting

C) Finds himself not in the temple but out in the wilderness – **Spokesman – prepare.... The Lord**

1) Weird clothes – Camel hair coat and a strange diet – locust and honey

C) And Now after several yrs Jesus is finally here – He is doing His thing –

1) But John is not his right hand man – no finds himself in Prison!

Why was John in prison?

A) Because he was gutsy man. This guy didn't back down for no one or for nothing.

B) **PC was not a part of his Vocabulary** - He was just this edgy, unafraid prophetic voice.

C) Here is what got him in trouble: Herod Antipas was the Tetrarch of Galilee- ruled that region

D) Herod Antipas wasn't happy with his wife, so dumps her

E) And he took a liking to his brother's wife, named Herodias/ persuaded her to leave his bro.

1) So Herodias and Herod Antipas hooked up –

John the Baptist felt even though Herod was a non-believer that he needed to say something and publicly rebuked Herod

A) Because he's brining defilement upon the Jewish homeland. **Imagine John today – Some of our leaders... their infidelities**

B) So, he rebukes Herod and Herodias and Herod has him put in prison.

C) I wondered if John felt – Lord this doesn't seem fair – I am in prison for doing the right thing

1) Doing what you called me to do - Your spokesman

As John is there in prison, 10 MONTHS - he's no doubt thinking, he's processing

A) John the B – starts having doubts – is Jesus really the messiah

B) So when two of John's followers come to visit he says – go and find Jesus and ask him -, **“Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”**

C) Wait a minute: This is John who stood in the Jordan declaring there is one coming.... **Sandal strap**

D) John who declared – when Jesus came **Behold.....who takes away.....**

1) This is John who said to Jesus – **I should not be baptizing you me**

E) This is John who said – **I must decrease**

But now John is having 2nd thoughts – Go ask

Jesus if he is the Christ or do we keep on looking? -What?

A) Why is John Doubting? – He is thinking – if Jesus is really the Messiah – **why am I in Prison?**

B) If Jesus is really on my side why am I in this mess?

1) I was just doing what God called me to do – so why did it turn out like this?

C) Ever had thoughts like that? Lord if you really called me here – why is this so hard?

1) Why is this happening to me?

I think we have all been in that place or will be at some point in our walks with Jesus

A) We say **“Lord this is not what I signed up for!”**

B) If you have ever felt that way you are NOT ALONE

Some of the greatest spiritual leaders of all time have suffered deep moments of depression, doubt and discouragement.

A) **Moses Numbers 11 – Asked the Lord to take his life.**

B) **Elijah** after his greatest spiritual victory – went into a horrible funk – and wanted to die – **Kill me**

C) **Jeremiah** – got discouraged from not seeing any results – Said I am never going to preach again

D) Paul and Silas – read in 2 Corinthians 1:8 **Burdened beyond measure and despaired even of life**

E) **Charles Spurgeon** was quoted as saying: that he gets so deep and in so many dark places of depression, he said, **"I go to areas, I pray none of you ever go."** He struggled.

F) Reformer **Martin Luther** struggled deeply with doubts and depression.

G) Spiritual warfare is heavy for those in ministry.

So John is struggling and he sends his guys

A) Picture the scene: Jesus excuse me **We have a question to ask you** –

B)Just for the record – not us – – John your cousin sent us to ask you a question –

1)John wants to know..... ANOTHER

C)Notice Jesus response here –It is powerful and encouraging

4 Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: 5 The blind see 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.

Notice Jesus doesn’t say: Go tell John I am disappointed in him

A)Go tell John to grow up

B)NO – he Doesn’t rebuke JOHN at all.

C)What Jesus does is he seeks to address the root of John’s problem – HIS FOCUS

1)In essence Jesus is saying John you are focused on the wrong thing

D)John was focused on what Jesus wasn’t doing – If you are the messiah – Why I am still in prison?

1)Why haven’t you got me out of here already?

Maybe you feel like you are in a prison of sorts in your life.

A)Things haven’t worked out like you thought and you feel trapped.

B)Prison of a physical illness – or prison of a difficult relationship

C)Prison of a ministry opportunity that hasn’t turned out the way you thought it would

D)Maybe our current culture – with all the chaos and division – is feeling like a prison to you!

You are wondering – doubting – God are you still here? Are you in this? Are you with me? US?

A)I want you to pay attention to what Jesus is doing here with John

B)Jesus is saying to John “John don’t focus on what I am not doing – focus on what I am doing.”

C)Go and tell John what you see and hear - The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed

and the deaf hear; the **dead are raised** up – **the poor are being taken care of**

D)Everything that Jesus is referring to here is what we would call Messiah Work!!!

1)Exactly what the OT prophets said the Messiah would be doing when he came – **And John knew that!**

Jesus wants John to change his focus! John Focused on what IS happening – NOT what ISN’T happening!

A)That is exactly what Jesus wants us to do as well.

B)Pastor Chuck used to say: When you don’t know what is going on – fall back on what you do know.

1)that is the key

C)Our problem is we have the tendency to focus on what God is not doing – instead of what he has done

1)What he is currently doing

D)Why I journal – Not a Chick thing – not a diary

1)Leather – manly –

So when I find myself in a funk of sorts – when I start to getting discouraged or depressed.

A)I pull out my journal to be reminded of what God has done and what God is doing

B)I read the things I was praying about last year – that have been answered

C)The things God has shown me – Every time my heart and soul are encouraged and refreshed

1)I need to do that often

See my natural disposition – Reformer – I tend to see what needs to be fixed – and done

A)My natural tendency is I to see the holes in the wall – I have to be reminded to celebrate victories

B)I can be driven by the reality that the tasks are never ending.

1)Younger days – I was a workaholic

C)I have sensed learned the balance –

1)Still have the tendency to focus what ...to be done

So I need to remind myself – of what the Lord has already done.

A) It can be so easy for me to focus on what He is not doing.

B) It is also the reason I need people in my life – like my wife and some of the people I work with –
1) who remind me of what God is doing right now.

C) People when a situation looks dark are able to see the light at the end of the tunnel

1) When all I see is darkness and problems

I think this is a word from the Lord for several of you today. – Doubt /discouraged

A) Sit down today – begin to write down everything that God has already done in your life

B) Write down the things that He is currently doing – and watch how your perspective changes

1) And When it does praise Him – worship him

C) Allow him to be the lifter of your head.

Note this: Jesus is not disappointed in you for your doubt and discouragement –

A) But he doesn't want you to stay there

6 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”

B) This is a subtle warning to John

C) The word offended can be translated stumbled

1) it was a word used to describe an animal that got caught in a trap.

D) Jesus is saying to John – if you don't change your FOCUS– it is going to trap you and ruin you!

Same is true for us today - Jesus is saying to you - if you don't change your focus – it's going to trap you – ruin you

A) Some of you here today are at a crossroads –

B) Jesus says – you can go this way toward freedom and Joy –

1) Or you can go this way – toward being trapped in despair and be ruined

C) It is all going to be determined by what you choose to focus on.

D) What Choice will you make today?

One last thing before we go our way today

⁷ As they departed, (Other translations: As they were leaving- these men are still in ear shot of this- is the idea) So as they were leaving, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. ⁹ But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ For this is *he* of whom it is written:

‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’

¹¹ “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist;

There is a lot there that we could unpack – But I want to make one simple point –

A) Jesus still thinks very highly of John – He is not ashamed of John – disappointed in John

B) No one greater than John – He was faithful to his call –

C) John preached around the area of the Jordan calling for repentance for the remission of sins

D) He taught that all flesh would see the salvation of God.

1) He instructed those who came to be baptized to bear fruits worthy of repentance.

E) He taught about charity and said that if you have plenty that you should share with others.

F) John even preached to soldiers that they should not do violence to any man,

1) not to falsely accuse anyone, and to be content with their pay

John had a Special mission and a special place in the heart of Jesus - In the story of Jesus

A) Jesus wants everyone to know how special John is

B) Jesus takes notice of faithfulness

C)Even in this low moment in John's life – Jesus is focused on – what he did right.

1)Jesus knows how the spirit can be willing but the flesh can be weak

D)There are times when the flesh just gets the best of us.

1)That is not what Jesus focuses on

In Hebrews 2:11 the writer of Hebrews is speaking of Jesus as the captain of our salvation

A)He makes this statement – Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brothers and sisters.

B)Ever been ashamed to own a sibling or another brother and sister in Christ?

1)That is not the heart of Jesus

Maybe you are struggling today – doubt or discouragement

A)Maybe you have given into the flesh – recently – the devil is trying to condemn you

B)Condemnation Vs Conviction – know the difference

C)Know this: Jesus is not ashamed of you. – He loves you – he is for you.

D)Title of this Series - Who does Jesus Love? YOU! - He loves you – he is for you.

He is our High Priest who because he became human and was tempted like we get tempted

A)He went through difficulties like we go through difficulties

B)He experienced sorrow –like we do – betrayal like we do.

C)The writer of Hebrews says – because of that He is able to sympathize with us in our weakness

D)He invites us to come boldly to His throne of Grace that we might receive mercy in our time of need.

E)Jesus loves you – for you – wants to help you – come to the throne of grace today

You are at a crossroad today: What are you going to focus on?

A)What is not happening – Or what He is doing and has done.

B)Perhaps you are here today and you are not a Jesus Follower – or Professed faith

1)Walked away –

C)Reason you are not a follower or the reason you walked about –

1)**God didn't do what you thought he should**

Someone hurt you or someone left you or someone betrayed you

A)Or the dream you were pursuing didn't pan out

B)And that has been what you have been focused on

1)What God didn't do or stop – or fix

C)Can I encourage you today – to FOCUS on what he did do for you.

When you were lost in your sin and rebellion

A)When you were in bondage to greed or lust – or some form of Sin

B)God sent Jesus to the rescue – To go to the cross in your place

1)Take the punishment you deserved – Died on the cross to pay the price for your sins

C)And three days later rose again – to give you life

D)Jesus did for you what you could never do for yourself –

1)He made a way for you to be in right relationship with God

E)Forgive sin, remove guilt and shame

But not only that – I want you to think about the times in your life – “close call”

A)The wreck that you just missed – “I got lucky – not that was God. – get your attention

B)The time that you should have been in trouble or should have got fired and didn't

1)I got lucky – No that was God – being gracious to get your attention

C)Many close calls – God was working every time

He loves you – He is for you – wants a relationship with you.

A) Respond to his invitation today – you are also at a crossroads – Faith or doubt – freedom – trapped

B) Now I think it is important to note: - John's earthly story didn't have a bright ending

C) He wasn't released from prison – beheaded

His last breath on earth – his next breath was in glory

A) I guarantee – you when John arrived in heaven – and was in God's presence

B) He didn't say - **I have a bone to pick with you**

1) No he completely understood

C) Realized – What Paul said was true – to live is Christ and to die is gain!

That is the way it will be for each one of us –

A) Things will make sense in glory

B) Rejoice now – Change of Focus today –

C) What has God done – what is he doing

B) Opportunity to do just that – right now. – Pray