

SERMON: IT CAN HAPPEN TO THE BEST OF US

Matthew 11:2-6

(2) Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples. (3) And said unto Him, Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another? (4) Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: (5) The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel to them. (6) And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

Introduction

John the Baptist was at his lowest point in his ministry. At one time, depending upon your viewpoint, he was the most famous or the most infamous person in Israel. His preaching near the Jordan River had swayed multitudes.

Now things were different. He was in jail, with execution just a matter of time. Most of his disciples were now following Jesus. His popularity had dwindled. John himself had said earlier, Jesus must increase, but I must decrease." I'm sure he thought, "Decrease this far?" He had no idea he would decrease to the bottom of a dark prison dungeon.

Perhaps he thought by now Jesus would have worked a miracle and gotten him out of jail. He was Jesus' biological cousin and His forerunner. Perhaps he thought by now Jesus would have overthrown the Romans who were occupying their home land.

John's faith became weak and he began to doubt. He began to doubt himself. He began to doubt his ministry. He even began to doubt Jesus. John asked himself, "Is He really the Messiah? Did I make a mistake when I promoted His ministry?" So, he decided to send word through two of his disciples to Jesus to get his questions answered. The answer he received from Jesus was a perfect answer, but not what he expected. Life is full of unexpected things.

We expect doubters to become believers, but we do not expect believers to become doubters. This is especially troubling when we are talking about John the Baptist. We expect Thomas to doubt, but not John. His whole ministry was filled with courage and confidence. He boldly proclaimed that Jesus was the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. He boldly preached repentance. Do you remember the time when he called the Pharisees and the Sadducees a brood of vipers? He even called out Herod for taking his brother's wife. That's what really got him in trouble. How dare he call out the king for immoral behavior? How could a prophet like that possibly experience doubt? Many of us wrongly assume all the great men and women of the Bible never had any doubts, but we will easily find out that was not the case.

We have all experienced doubts. Doubt means we don't know what to do next. For the moment we are not sure what we believe. We have second thoughts about the decisions we have made in the past, which makes us even more uncertain about decisions we need to make for the future.

John had serious doubts. He had paved the highway on which the Messiah would travel, but now he was locked up in prison while Jesus traveled down the road without him. From John's perspective, Jesus didn't seem to appreciate all the work he had done for Him. The least a Messiah could do would be to visit him in prison, which was what Jesus told His disciples to do in Matthew 25:36.

What John had said about Jesus being a “Great Deliverer” seemed to be nothing more than a “Great Disappointment.” Jesus appeared to be unconcerned that John was in prison and about to lose his head. In John’s mind, everything he had preached about justice and righteousness was now in question. John the Baptist’s doubt is a warning for all of us. If it can happen to John it can also happen to each of us. We must constantly be on our guard, especially as we endure this Covid-19 plague. Let’s see how we can defeat doubt, but first we must know the facts about doubt.

Exposition

The Facts About Doubt

1. Doubt’s Main Breeding Ground Is Trouble.

(Some of us have trouble with a capital “T”)

2. Doubt Can Make the Strongest Weak.

(It Works Through Depression)

3. Doubt Drives Us to Foolish Questions and Foolish Conclusions.

(Do You Remember Job’s Wife?-Don’t Be Too Hard On Her)
(She Lost All Ten of Her Children in One Day)

4. Doubt Can Make Us Feel We Are Overlooked or Abandoned By God.

(Even Jesus Felt This Way-Please Read Matthew 27:46)

5. Doubt Can Make Us Feel We Are Deceived or Betrayed By God

(Please Read Jeremiah 20:7)

The Fix for Doubt

1. Acknowledge Your Doubts-Denial Is Not Healthy.

(Please Read Mark 9:24)

2. Question Your Doubts, Not Your Faith.

(Question Your Counting, Not the Number System)
(Doubt the Thermometer, Not the Established Principle of Science)

3. Concentrate on What You Know, Not On What You Don’t Know.

(Don’t Let the Enemy Give You Amnesia and You Forget All God Has Done)
(Please read Psalm 103:2)

4. Remember, God’s Ways Are Not Our Ways and It Is Not Always About Me.

(Please Read Isaiah 55:8-9 and Mark 8:34-35)

5. Acknowledging The Power Of God Is The Solution.

(Jesus Worked Miracles In The Presence Of John's Disciples)

(His Miracles Proved His Deity)

(Trust In the Lord With Your Heart, But Use Your Head)

(Proverbs 3:5)

Closing Thoughts

Jesus didn't condemn John for his doubts. Jesus understood and demonstrated his love toward John and defended him against the people. When John was thinking the worst, Jesus said the best about John. That is a lesson for all of us; let's always look for the best in others. Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

Related Scriptures

Matthew 11:7-11

Luke 7:19-28

John 10:39-42

Theological Note

Doubt comes in many forms. Many theologians have divided them into three categories.

Ontological doubt questions the very existence of God. Attributive doubt questions the nature or characteristics of God. Modal doubt questions the methods or actions of God.

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