

Sunday Sermon November 28, 2016

Sermon Text : Matthew 11:2-10

Sermon Theme: Jesus shows us proof.

²While John was in prison, he heard about the things Christ was doing. He sent two of his disciples ³to ask him, “Are you the Coming One or should we wait for someone else?”

⁴Jesus answered them, “Go, report to John what you hear and see: ⁵The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the gospel is preached to the poor. ⁶Blessed is the one who does not take offense at me.”

⁷As these two were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the crowds about John. “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸What did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? No, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. ⁹So what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you! And he is much more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is the one about whom it is written, ‘Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’” (EHV)

Has anyone ever said, “Prove it to me. Prove to me what you believe is true, then I will believe it.” Whether it is from a friend who is skeptical about God, a professor or teacher who doesn’t believe that the Bible is correct, or a coworker who has his or her own set of beliefs, this statement is often a way to end a conversation about God. Just give me some tangible proof and then I will believe. What is the proper response to someone who says this? What is the right thing to say when we are asked for proof?

The answer is... there is no perfect answer. We don’t have proof that will MAKE someone believe what the Bible says about Jesus is true. Faith is exactly the opposite of proof. Faith believes in the absence of truth. Sometimes faith believes even when there seems to be truth which contradicts it.

But before we give up speaking with anyone who might challenge the faith that we hold, there is a way to answer that question. It is the way that people have been answering questions about Jesus since he first appeared. It was the way that Jesus himself answered those who asked him to prove himself. Jesus used the proof of Scripture. He used what Scripture said about him and how he had fulfilled those Scriptures in ways that only the Son of God could.

This section of Scripture puzzles many people. Why would John the Baptist ask Jesus to prove if he was the Coming One or if they should wait for another? There are a number of possible answers to this question.

1. John was in doubt as to who Jesus actually was. Was he the Messiah or another prophet/ messenger sent from God, not much different from himself?

2. John is in prison for preaching about Jesus. He has only heard about the things that Jesus has done, he has not seen these things for himself. Certainly, this news would have sounded amazing to his ears. As he is looking forward anticipating his death, he is looking for confirmation that the truth of Jesus is as amazing as it sounds.

3. John is building his own disciples, his own followers, up. He wants them to be sure of what he already knows to be the truth. With his death looming, he wants them to no longer follow the Messenger, he wants them to follow the Messiah.

The answer is certainly not that John was in doubt about who Jesus was. John certainly had the lessons from his mother and father about his own amazing birth and his mission on earth. He also would certainly have been taught from an early age about the amazing story of his cousin Jesus’ birth. John had put that faith and knowledge of a Savior into action. He had done as he was supposed to do. He had preached and taught the people to prepare themselves for the Messiah’s appearance and to do that now, because the Messiah was soon to be revealed among them.

When Jesus came, John gladly pointed to Jesus as the one sent from God, promised of old. He was not skeptical of his cousin, but knew that Jesus needed to become greater while he himself had to become less important. John gave clear confession of this when he pointed to Jesus and called him the Lamb of God, sent to take away the sins of the world. He was there when Jesus was baptized, the heavens opened, and the voice of God declared that this was his Son of whom he was well-pleased.

The answer is probably a combination of the 2nd and 3rd choice. John was a human being who was in prison. He did not have the freedom to see the things that were being reported to him by his disciples. But the

reports that he is hearing are pretty incredible. People are following Jesus in greater numbers than they followed him!?! Jesus was doing miracles and raising from the dead!?!

What is our first reaction when someone tells us a story that seems unbelievable? It is not that we don't believe the person, but we want some more from them, some more details, just to be sure. John wants his Messiah to be as amazing as he had heard.

The second part of the answer lies in John's own followers. They know that John has been preaching and teaching that Jesus is the Messiah. They have been hearing and seeing some amazing things, but before they turn their allegiance to this man, they want their teacher's seal of approval, they want their teacher to confirm that this is really the Messiah he claims to be.

What would you do in this situation? John does something which is actually pretty smart. He sends his disciples to speak directly with Jesus and he gives them the freedom to ask the question that is on their hearts and minds, "**Are you the Christ, or should we be looking for another to follow?**"

While we certainly have others who ask us to prove Jesus to them, don't we have times when we have doubts and questions about Jesus as well? Aren't there times when what Jesus has done for us seems so far away from our earthly life that we have trouble applying those things? Maybe the experts are right, there does seem to be an awful lot of proof in that scientific thinking? Maybe my friends are right, why would a loving God allow terrible things to happen on the earth? Wouldn't a loving God be more loving? Maybe my coworker is right to sum up all the religions of the world into one and to be as good as he can be to make really any god happy?

If we don't struggle with the big question, don't we struggle with doubts that Jesus can and does forgive us as he promises? Will Jesus forgive me for this sin..... again? Can Jesus love me when I have done something like this?

Just as others struggle with questions about Jesus, wanting proof, we also have questions about Jesus, there are also times that we want proof that what we believe is correct.

John's solution shows his own faith. John does not try to answer their questions on his own. He does not try to defend his teaching, instead he sends them to Jesus. He knows that by sending them to Jesus, Jesus himself will answer their question in a much better way than he will be able to answer it. Jesus will answer their question in such a way that they will no longer doubt, but believe that this is the Messiah that was sent from God.

Where will we turn when we have questions about Jesus that need answering? We will go to Jesus and surround ourselves in his Word. That Word is the only message that provides us proof of who Jesus really is what he has done to save us. It is through the Word that the Holy Spirit convinces us that this is our one true God and our only Savior from sin. It is through the Word that the Holy Spirit silences our fears with the news that Jesus can and does forgive us all of our sins, every time and grants us a new life lived in him. Jesus answers our questions in a way that our faith is built up and we believe in him.

What at first looked like a question from John the Baptist for Jesus to prove himself, turns into an opportunity for Jesus to teach not only these followers of John of who he was, but also the other people who were also following him.

Jesus uses the best proof he can to show the people who he is. The Jews were well aware of the prophecy of the Messiah from Isaiah 35. **Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; ⁴ say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you."** ⁵ **Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. ⁶ Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.** The Jews were clear that these words spoke of the great power and authority of the Messiah.

Jesus could have gone a lot of different ways in answering this question. It asks the people to make their own conclusion if he is the Messiah using this information which they already knew. **Go, report to John what you hear and see: ⁵The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the gospel is preached to the poor.** What do you think, am I doing what the prophet Isaiah said the Messiah would do, or is there someone else you should be waiting for? What have you witnessed, what have you seen, what is your conclusion?

Jesus is not being condescending in any way when he says this. He is asking Jewish people to do what God had always asked his people to do. His people were always to be looking for the Messiah and applying these prophecies to the anyone who claimed to be that Messiah. In this case, the answer to Jesus question is an emphatic yes. Jesus was the only one who could truly heal the blind, the lame, and the deaf because he was the Son of God. Because Jesus was proving himself as the Messiah, the Gospel of Jesus was spreading. People were listening to the one who was fulfilling these prophecies before them.

Jesus asks them to come to one more conclusion as one more proof of who he was. He asks them why they had followed John into the wilderness? Was it because he was a man who preached, looked, and acted like all the other religious leaders, or was it something else? Of course it was something else. This man was a prophet sent from God, he was the Messenger, the forerunner of Messiah, and his preaching and teaching stirred the hearts of the people to respond.

Jesus point is clear. Your hearts were stirred as John preached and now you are witnessing what John preached about, you are witnessing the fulfillment of the Scriptures, the coming of the Messiah, just as John said you would.

Jesus silenced the doubts of John's disciples by pointing them to Scripture's promises of the Messiah. When we have doubts, when our friends and neighbors want proof, we can do no better than what Jesus did himself..... listen to Word, share the Word, because in that Word there is proof that leads to heaven.