

## Encountering Jesus: The Doubter

Pastor Rob Bedard

November 11, 2018

Text: Matthew 11:2-6

### NOTES:

#### A. Introduction to John the Baptist:

1. John was Jesus' cousin, born about 6 months before Him. He came from a priestly line but never became part of the religious establishment, choosing to minister in the desert.
2. He preached repentance and baptism, baptizing Jesus, who he recognized as the One who fulfilled the ancient Messianic prophecies (Matthew 3:11-17; Mark 1:2-11).
3. Later, when imprisoned by Herod, John sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus "Are You the One..." Matthew 11:3. **Pastor Rob:** "How do you go from 'This is the One,' to 'Are you the One?' John experienced a faith-quake moment."

#### B. Faith-quakes:

1. **Pastor Rob:** "No matter where we live, who we are, what our economic status, how cushioned we feel, every single one of us will experience faith- quakes."
2. We ask questions of God but He doesn't answer, at least not in the way we expect or want (as John expected "release from prison").
3. Like John we are easily shaken by the wrong kinds of God expectations.

#### C. Two kinds of expectations:

1. **Faith expectations of what God will do:**
  - a. "With man this is impossible but with God all things are possible" – Matthew 19:26.
  - b. Pastor Rob's experience: During a Bible College visit to a church in Mississauga, he got the impression he would pastor there some day. Four years later that church called him, offered him a position there and Rob had a wonderful "God can do anything" realization.
2. **Expectation of what God will do for me:**
  - a. **For John:**
    - i. Recognized Jesus as the fulfillment of the OT prophecies of Messiah (Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1) and expected to be set free.
    - ii. Jesus, in His answer to John's question, "Are you the One?" reminded John of how he had seen Jesus do what was described in Isaiah (though in His answer, He left out the "And the opening of the prison to those who are bound" – Isa. 61:1b).
  - b. **For us:**
    - i. We may come to Jesus with an entitled attitude: "You're lucky to have me, God; I could be serving lots of gods but I chose You." We carry on with life scripted our way, keeping God in our back pocket for the time we need Him. Then, when He doesn't answer prayer the way we want, we lose faith in Him.
    - ii. **Pastor Rob:** "We pray for miracles for the sick but we need to be careful that our faith is founded on Jesus and what He can do, not on what we want."
    - iii. **A.J. Swoboda:** "Doubt is sometimes proof that we have faith." **Pastor Rob:** "The one who never doubts is the one who never thinks of their faith. When you have questions and nags of doubt, don't bury them or numb them but deal with them in God. Go to the One who can handle your questions."
    - iv. We need to recognize **God is love, God is able, but God is also sovereign**—e.g. Daniel's friends: Dan. 3:17-18.
    - v. **Pastor Rob:** "If your God must do what you expect Him to do for you, then you have placed yourself as God and He is not. Be careful to leave Jesus on the throne where He belongs."

#### D. Jesus' answer to John and us: "Blessed is the one who does not stumble over this" (Matthew 11:6)

1. "Blessed" = "makarios": enviable state of shalom (peace), a sense God is in control and all is in His hand. (Same word "blessed" as in Matthew 5:3-10.)
2. "Stumble" = "skandalizo": scandalized, offended, stumble, fall away.
3. **Pastor Rob's paraphrase:** "Blessed is the one who is not scandalized because of Me, because of what I do, or don't do, or do differently than you thought."

#### E. Responding to faith-quakes:

1. Like an Etch-A-Sketch which when shaken loses all the etchings made. When our faith is shaken, we lose all that God has etched on our hearts.
2. Like a Polaroid Camera, which, over time, develops an image we can make sense of. As God does what he does, over time we begin to see what He is up to.

### DISCUSSION:

1. How were John and Jesus related Why did John think Jesus was Messiah? What caused John to doubt Jesus? How do you think John responded to Jesus' answer?
2. What is a faith-quake? Have you ever experienced one? How did you handle it? Share your stories.
3. What are your expectations when you pray? Discuss the tension inherent in the truths that God is love, God is able, and God is sovereign.
4. How do you deal with doubts? What did Jesus say to John in answer to his doubts? What is your main takeaway from this message?

### PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, we relate so well to John the Baptist when life doesn't go as we expect and heaven seems silent. Help us to experience the peace that comes when we acknowledge and trust in Your love, Your ability, and Your sovereignty, even in situations that are difficult and our prayers are not answered as we hoped. Amen.