

Does anyone remember what the message was last Sunday? There is a song that we sung today in the beginning of the service that reminds us of this message. John the Baptist preached it boldly to all who came to be baptized at the Jordan River. Yes it was, "*prepare ye the way of the Lord!*" Remember those confident and tough words of John? The Lord is coming! Repent! Prepare yourself for him.... (pause)

Well, today we hear quite a different message from John the Baptist. We know that he is in prison, for not speaking very fondly about King Herod, and he is sending his disciples to Jesus, with rather unusual question, at least for John. "*Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?*" Now what's going on here? One would not believe that we're talking about the same John? Does John the Baptist doubt? Is he going through a spiritual crisis? And can someone like John even go through something like that? (pause)

Anyone can go through a spiritual crisis and guess what-- all of us do, even John the Baptist. And when we think about the circumstances he was in, one isn't so surprised about his doubts anymore. He was given a great task, to prepare the way for the Lord's Messiah, and he did his best, but now, he's all alone, suffering in prison, abandoned by the crowds, his disciples might be the only ones who are still thinking of him. He doesn't know what's going to happen to him.

Can we relate to John? (pause) I know we're not in prison, but think about all the things that imprison you in your everyday lives? Don't we all live in some kind of captivity that challenges our faith daily? Whether it's our busy-ness, money, broken relationships, sin, grief, illness... (pause) Sometimes we doubt. We come to our Lord, and ask him Lord where are you? Do you hear me? Can you help me or should I wait for someone else? (pause) We all have John moments, many of us daily.

Jesus answers John's disciples, by saying, "*Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news brought to them.*" Go and tell John what you hear and see. John didn't see these things happening for he was in the prison. It wasn't given to him to see so that he can believe. John's faith was put through the toughest test, he had to become one

of whom Jesus says, *“Blessed are those who haven’t seen and yet have believed.”* He had to give up all control, he had overcome his need for evidence and simply had to trust, that Jesus is the one. We are on the same boat. We can’t walk up to Jesus personally and ask him, “Lord are you the one, or should we be waiting for someone else?” We also must believe--And that’s not always an easy task.

But did you realize that Jesus doesn’t leave his servant John in the dark. For his answer to John brought more comfort and peace that we can comprehend. For Jesus in his answer to John quotes the prophet Isaiah, who’s words John knew by heart, and Jesus quotes very important passage, announcing the coming of the Messiah. The 35th chapter contains the words, *“Say to those who are of a fearful heart, be strong do not fear, here is your God. He will come to save you, then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped, then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.”*

These words were sweet music to John’s ears. One could say it would have been nice if John was given the chance to get out of prison to be able to see and truly experience the power of Jesus, but for John it was not necessary, for through these powerful words of Isaiah, his faith was regained, and his trust was put back into place. John didn’t have to worry anymore, he didn’t have to think about his task, nor future, for the Messiah has come, and believing in this good news of the Gospel made all the difference.

That very same good news of Jesus Christ is available to all of us, the story of Jesus, his life, death and resurrection, the stories we are remembering right now—the birth of the child in Bethlehem, the Angels proclaiming joy and peace to the world—these things happened for us. They are joyful events that have the power to change our lives and give us hope and comfort.

Jesus knew where John was in his faith journey, he knew what words would restore his faith. John the Baptist’s doubt didn’t make him less in the eyes of Jesus. Jesus meets us as well in our faith struggles, he doesn’t think any less of us when we wrestle with doubt. Through the struggle of John he reminds us that our faith can be restored when we cling to the Good News. And he calls us to look around us, hear and see how this good news is manifested in our lives daily. Jesus want us to pause, look around and simply believe. This Advent believe that the

Lord is here, and it is good. (pause) It is through such faith that one becomes a part of God's kingdom.

And we are all in it together. John the Baptist doubted when he was alone. We doubt the most when we're alone, and our doubt takes over when we have no one to tell us, that they see God's presence in our lives. My prayer is that in the times of spiritual crisis we can be here for one another, that we can as a family of faith cling to the Good News and carry each other's faith, (pause) strengthening one another, praying for each other, lifting each other up. That's what will make Christ's presence among us most visible, that's the way people will be able to see and experience that the Savior has truly come and that there is no need to wait for another.

Amen