

Matthew ch 11 vs. 1-6

I'd like to invite you this morning to turn in your bibles to Matt ch. 11 as we continue to truck steadily through the book of Matt. Last week we finished off the instructions of Jesus to His 12 apostles concerning His sending them out as forerunners ahead of Himself. And there in Ch 10 Jesus not only gives them instructions for their immediate mission, but He also gives them insight into what the future holds for many of them as they go out as witness' of who He is.

What was it that He was preparing them for? Hostility, opposition, and rejection; but He tells them not to let that hinder what God wants to do in their lives and not to be shy concerning their open allegiance to Him. That they were to share openly those things that God was ministering to their hearts. Even as we're not to be shy or ashamed of our allegiance to Him and we're not to conceal those things that God is speaking to *our* hearts during our times of devotion or quiet times with the Lord. But rather we're to reveal those things openly.

Why, #1 it's a witness and a testimony to His glory, and #2 God is in control and He's not going to let anything happen to you apart from His sovereign will allowing it. And we saw last week God's continuing interest in even the smallest most insignificant details of our lives. Because if He takes care of the sparrows, not letting 1 of them fall to the ground apart from His will; how much more is He going to watch out for those who He's created in His own image who are jeopardizing their lives testifying and making confession both verbally and through their lifestyles of Him.

Jesus calls for whole hearted allegiance to Himself, He gave Himself whole heartedly for you and me and now in return expects nor acknowledges nothing less from us, and many times that allegiance can cause a contention that will sever the closest of ties, even the family unit. If you commit yourself completely over to Jesus Christ and begin to live your life for Him and yet your mom or dad or son or daughter, and sometimes even your husband or wife doesn't; many times what happens is that through your refusal to compromise there arises this contention that many times leads to a severance if the other doesn't come to know Jesus.

That's why it's so important that your love for Jesus be supreme over anything or anyone else in your life. Because if it's not what happens is that when those contentions arise over your convictions; instead of you standing firm as a witness sold out to Jesus, what happens is that you compromise your integrity. And you compromise your witness; you compromise your walk and ultimately your relationship with Jesus Christ Because what you're doing is showing Jesus that your relationship with whoever or whatever takes priority over your commitment and devotion and love for Him.

Yet Jesus said “*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*” And He displayed the greatest act of love for you possible. “*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” And now you’re going to cheapen that love relationship by placing someone or something else as priority over Him in your life?

He doesn’t go for that, but He does reward your commitment to serve and honor Him in even the most insignificant acts of service that you do as unto Him, it never goes unnoticed by God. Even if it’s just a cup of cold water that you give someone in the name of Jesus. You will by no means lose your reward.

Vs 1

Remember that Jesus had basically sent His disciples ahead of Him as forerunners and here He’s basically following up, teaching and Preaching in their cities. The phrase “their cities” speaks of Jewish cities, remember in vs. 5-6 of ch 10 He told them not to go to the gentiles or the Samaritans but rather to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the Jew 1st. And we took the time then to discuss the various reasons for that.

Now Matt unlike Mark and Luke doesn’t give us any insight into how that all went, what was the general response to them or anything else. He keeps the focus entirely on Jesus. It’s almost like there were 2 cameras following them around and the 1 that Mark and Luke were behind reports the results of their mission but Matts' camera never leaves Jesus. Luke 9:6 tells us that “*they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.*” Mark 6:12-13 gives us even a little more detail, he tells us that “*they went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.*” But Matt isn’t as concerned with reporting details that concern them near as much as he is keeping all the focus and attention centered on Jesus, so he draws no attention to their works here but continues to keep the cameras of our minds rolling on Jesus.

Really vs. 1 of ch 11 should have been vs. 43 of ch 10 because it draws the conclusion of that particular segment of Matt’s account of that occurrence. Now he switches gears all together and brings John the Baptist back into the picture. The last time we read of him was clear back in ch. 3 when he was preaching repentance, testifying of the coming judgment and baptizing Jesus, just prior to Jesus beginning His public ministry. Then in CH 4 vs. 12 we see John put into prison but it’s been awhile since we’ve heard from John and here he resurfaces.

VS 2

Again Matt doesn't tell us why John was put in prison, only that he's there. And apparently he's been there a little while. Marks Gospel ch 6 tells us that Herod Antipas had imprisoned John (to make a long story short) because John had busted him for taking his brother's wife as his wife. John called it out for the sin that it was and Herod put him in jail because of it, his wife wanted to kill John but Herod knew the people respected John and considered him a prophet so he just let him sit in prison.

Now eventually John was martyred by Herod because he offered Herodias' daughter anything she wanted up to ½ of his kingdom because he was pleased by the way he danced for him. So she went to her mom and said what should I ask for and since she held Johns acknowledgment of them being in sin against him personally (which is usually the case) John was just a messenger of the truth but they held it against John personally.

And when you're the one that's responsible to expose the truth to people when they're blowing life, they usually hold it against you personally, rather than thanking you for your concern. It was Gods' word they had a problem with not John, they just took it out on Him. And so when she asked her mom what to ask for she said the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter. But in or text this morning we find John still in prison and as I said he's probably been there for a little while now and so as he hears about all that's going no doubt via his disciples He sends word to Jesus and asks Him.

Vs 3

You remember the message that John had been preaching was that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And that there was 1 who was *coming after* him whose shoes he wasn't even worthy to carry. And that's what he's asking Jesus here when he says are you the coming one, he's asking Jesus are you the messiah or should we be looking for someone else, the phrase "Coming one" being a messianic reference.

And the question that so often surfaces over this text is that if John so boldly pointed out Jesus as "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*" And baptized him and saw the Spirit descend upon Jesus like a dove. Then why is he now asking this question to Jesus? Why now the seeming skepticism or question? Well there are a few different takes on that question of which I'm not going to entertain them all this morning, but 1 thing's for certain and that we can all empathize with and that's that John is human and you have to put yourself in his position before you can criticize his question.

Because he does have a powerful working knowledge of the scriptures and he's preached of the judgment that the messiah would bring. and No doubt he's aware of the scriptures that prophecy of the messiah leading the captivity captive (Ps 68:18). and "*To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God;*" Isaiah 61:1,2. Yet here he sets bound up in the prison of Herod and Jesus doesn't seem to be overly concerned about it.

The nation of Israel is under Roman rule, and so there was an expectancy for the Messiah to break the yoke of the Roman rule and establish His political kingdom setting Israel above all the other tribes and tongues and nations. And so what we may be seeing is that it wasn't so much John's faith that's in question here as it is his patience. John's saying hey are you the One we're looking for or should we be looking for someone else because I'm tired of sitting around in jail, he's saying let's get the kingdom established here. If you're the one there's no need to procrastinate let's do it.

It's easy to understand John's possible confusion here; now looking back it's easy for us to criticize John because we have the big picture. But they were expecting the immediate fulfillment of the kingdom of God on earth at the appearing of the messiah, but Jesus said *"My kingdom is not of this world."* He was about the business of establishing a spiritual kingdom on His 1st visit, His earthly rule will take place on His 2nd visit and He will rule with a rod of iron and over throw all that oppose Him. But at this time that wasn't His purpose. But as I said it's easy to understand the confusion that John seems to be experiencing here. Because he's been prophesying all these great things that the Messiah would do and John's message emphasized the coming judgment that the Messiah would bring. So he would naturally be inclined to think that Jesus (being the messiah) would rapidly bring judgment on those that brought his ministry to a close and vindicate His forerunner who had been so faithful to the call that had been put on his life. And yet Jesus was simply moving around in the midst of the common people teaching and preaching and healing the sick and afflicted, which are all great things but meanwhile his forerunner who had been so faithful sat helplessly in prison.

Looking at this in retrospect we see that John was indeed faithful as the forerunner to the messiah, and now that the Messiah is on the scene his ministry has been fulfilled. And when God's done with your life, when He's accomplished in and through me all that He has prepared for me to do. And when the ministry that God has entrusted to me is complete I'm ready to go home, and have no desire to stick around needlessly any more then I have to. God has accomplished in and through John all that for which He sent him, to prepare the way of the Lord. Now He's ready to bring him home, but John's not looking at it that way.

He's looking for an immediate establishment of an earthly kingdom, and if that were the case there would be no need to procrastinate and he would be just in imploring Jesus to get the show on the road.

God's ways aren't our ways and just like John we have a tendency to be just a little bit short sighted. We have such finite (limited) understanding of the purposes and plan of God and yet we get so frustrated when things don't go exactly like we think they should. We fail to realize that God's in control and He has a plan that by far surpasses ours and He's never late.

You see all that John prophesied about the Messiah was going to happen and is going to happen, that's not where his misunderstanding lied. The part he was confused on was the timing. He was looking for immediate results much like the microwave generation of today. And so he's asking Jesus if you're not going to judge the wicked and set the captives free (again according to his own expectation) then should we be looking for another? Is someone else going to come after you? He's asking Jesus are you the one I've rolled my dice on or are you basically another forerunner?

Vs 4-5

So rather than answer John directly He points to His works to serve as the credentials that testified of who He was. Remember in John ch 14 when Jesus was preparing His disciples for the fact that He was going away (speaking of His death and resurrection and ascension)

Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. Jesus was pointing to His works, as proof of who He was and that HE was the Messiah.

That's the same thing that He's doing here. And the things that He tells them to report to John are those things that the scriptures testify that the messiah would indeed fulfill. So Jesus is using words to report to John that will evoke his recollection of messianic prophecy in a fuller capacity. He says (repeat vs. 5) *Isa 29:18-19* says, "In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. The humble also shall increase their joy in the LORD, And the poor among men shall rejoice In the Holy One of Israel. *Isa 35:5-6* "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. *Isa 61:1* "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; Jesus gently reminds John that he can rest at ease knowing that Jesus is in fact busy about His messianic duties and that things are proceeding according to schedule; just not John's schedule. By the power of His Holy Spirit Jesus is still busy about His messianic duties today.

One commentator puts it like this.

1. Sinners are blind; their understanding is so darkened by sin that they see not the way of truth and salvation.
2. They are lame-not able to walk in the path of righteousness.
3. They are leprous, their souls are defiled with sin, the most loathsome and inveterate disease; deepening, in themselves, and infecting others.
4. They are deaf to the voice of God, his word, and their own conscience.
5. They are dead in trespasses and sins; God, who is the life of the soul, being separated from it by iniquity. Nothing less than the power of Christ can redeem from all this; and, from all this, that power of Christ actually does redeem every repentant believing soul. (From Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by BibleSoft)

He goes on to say “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: he opens the eyes of the blind; enables the lame to walk with an even, steady; and constant pace in the way of holiness; cleanses the lepers from all the defilement of their sins; opens the ears of the deaf to hear his pardoning words; and raises those who were dead in trespasses and sins to live in union with himself to all eternity.”

Jesus is still busy about the fulfillment of His messianic duties today and He’s right on schedule and He wants to touch your life as well and make Himself real to you in a personal way. He wants to give you sight to see who He is and open your ears to hear His voice. But it’s your choice HE won’t force Himself upon you. And so after reassuring John that He is in fact the Messiah He says in Vs 6.

Vs.6

Or has no doubts concerning Me. Jesus says Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me. The direct context is that of Jesus gently exhorting John to trust in Him and not to be stumbled or “offended” by any preconceived ideas of what the Messiah should be like. Because again they expected a political Messiah who would set the Jewish captives free and judge and condemn all that opposed Him. But what did Jesus say *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”*

Now for us it could be “well when I gave my heart to Jesus I would be free from all my problems, I thought my marriage would be immediately put back together or all my family problems would be solved. Or fill in the blank, it could be a # of things, I wouldn’t go through financial hardships or emotional stresses.

Don't be tripped up by any preconceived ideas of how Jesus is to work in your life or what His priorities should be in your life or the order in which He approaches things in your life. He's the Lord and He's right on schedule and you can be confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; I've seen people slip through the cracks because when they gave their hearts to Jesus their marriages weren't immediately rectified like they thought was supposed to happen and then just couldn't understand why the Lord wouldn't immediately remedy their marriage.

In all actuality what they wanted was for Jesus to violate their spouses freewill to choose Him or not and just take up residence in their hearts by force and fix all their problems. And when the Lord wouldn't do that they were offended, or stumbled. Jesus is the Lord, we're not. And He serves His own agenda, not ours. And His agenda does not allow Him to violate anyone else's freewill. So if your spouse refuses to accept Jesus and you do; praise the Lord that you made that choice that gives you everlasting life but your problems in this life aren't over.

Marriage is hard even if you're both believers, because anytime you get 2 sinners together there's going to be problems. And this is just a random example but it goes acrossed the board. The point being let the Lord be the Lord and don't be stumbled by your own preconceived notions concerning Jesus. (repeat Vs 6)