

AN UNQUESTIONED FAITH IS QUESTIONABLE

SERIES: REACH | WEEK 5 | 2.21.2021

We are so excited right now, I mean, God's doing some just incredible things around here. It's like every time this building opens up it's, I mean, there's so many people coming, so much happening, and so many people just going, "I need to figure God out, and I need to figure out my spiritual life." And this is what we've been praying for so long. And so many people responded to that and just sensing God's presence in this place and wherever they're going. So thank you for being here. Thank you for being part of it. Thank you for responding as you have.

And we just want to say good morning to those of you online, um, whether you're in your living room watching on the big screen or still in bed – are you kidding me? Nah, it's okay, you stay in bed, it's cool. Anyhow, those are you in this room, thanks for getting out of bed, those of you up in the balcony! I said to someone after first service, I said, "I didn't see you in the service." He said, "I was on the balcony." I tell you what, you can hide from me up there, I barely see your faces up there, but thank you all of you for being up there. Our young adults just filling up the first five rows, you all rock. Anyhow, so it's just great to be with you and it's just fun to share God's Word with you. This morning already we've had baptisms out in the Café in-between services. God's moving! We're seeing people putting their trust in Jesus almost every week here at Calvary, and so we're just excited, we're celebrating this morning and it's a great day okay.



So when we come to Calvary we open up our Bibles, this morning we're opening up to Matthew Chapter 11. We share this all the time – we are a people of The Book. We know what our source of truth is, we've decided that here, and we're always just driving back to that. Most of you are in agreement that that's your source of truth, that's why you keep on coming back here because you know we're going to just drive to the Word of God. There's a lot of things we could talk about, a lot of things that we could ruminate on, but we know this is the eternal Word and the eternal truth of God and so we just keep on going back to it. And every week that we do we're like, "Wow! That just hit me right where we needed it to hit us" – and that's what the Word of God has promised to do.

I'm going to start out today by just reading starting at Chapter 11, verse 1, and if you want to follow along you can, and if you just want to listen that's so cool.

¹ When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

² Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ⁴ And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. ⁹ What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is he of whom it is written,

*"Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you."*

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11 "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

– MATTHEW 11:1-11 (ESV)

You know, just to go back to verse 3, huge question: *"Are you the one?"* Jesus, are You the one? Have we gotten this wrong? Should we go look for someone else? Pretty bold question to be coming right from the Bible. Hey, an unquestioned faith is extremely questionable and it will eventually crack and fall underneath you. **I want you to hear this this morning: Ask your questions.** Don't be afraid of asking your questions. God gave you a great mind. He has given you a great curiosity. He's given you an incredible intellect. And He's given you the ability to think through the issues of life, to think through the issues of the Word of God, and figuring out what He says in here and understanding it and rightly dividing it. Don't for a minute—that little nagging question that's in the back of your mind—don't blow it off. If something doesn't make sense, if something is incongruent, go ahead and try to figure out how do I put it together—ask the question.



John the Baptist, he's the guy here that's asking the question. We haven't heard from him since Chapter 3 of this book. He's Jesus' cousin, he's the one that was there from Jesus' earliest days, he's the one chosen by God Himself to be a prophet. John's a guy who knows an awful lot and yet in the moment he finds himself in something doesn't make sense. There's a doubt, and doubt is not the opposite of faith – unbelief is. The Pharisees had a starting place, it was unbelief. John has a starting place, it's belief, it's just that he's got questions, he's struggling. Like, I want to believe this, I know what I believe, I know what I've always been taught, I know what God has shown me, but I need a little more information. I need some questions answered.

Now the Pharisees, they led with unbelief. They led with the handout. They led with the idea somehow I want to trip Jesus up. I'll just ask you the question: Where's your starting point? We started here this morning and said hey, my starting point is the Word of God. We all have to have this anchor where we go: Okay, what is it that I'm going to depend on? Oh, I meet people, *oh, like, it's some guru, or it's some writing that took place a long time ago, you know, some professor somewhere that I'm just like pumped up about.* It's *some type of music that when I listen to it I find my* – whatever. For me, it's this Book, and when I have questions about life, when I have questions about God, when I have questions about godliness I go to this Book. And this morning I want us to be encouraged to question our faith and not be afraid of that. To question it with the starting point of belief but saying hey, I know where to go to get those answers and I'm going to dive in there and figure it out.



So let me set this thing up. John the Baptist is in prison, that's what this text starts out by saying, and it happened, you know, you remember he had been this great preacher. And Herod the king went to Rome and when he was in Rome he was there visiting his brother and he became infatuated with his brother's wife and, yeah, things went where they shouldn't have gone. He goes back to Israel and he gets rid of his own wife and he brings his brother's wife to him, and John speaks up about it. He speaks out about it, says this is wrong, this shouldn't be happening. And King Herod does what kings love to do, he wants to shut down any kind of opposition and puts him in prison on the other side of the sea; he ultimately be will be beheaded. So that's what's going into this and he's sitting there in prison.

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He's young, he's late 20's, early 30's at the latest, and he's thinking to himself, *Wait a minute, this isn't how I saw all this working, This isn't how I saw this following Jesus.* I mean this was the man, I mean, God had made him to be a prophet and he would speak out truth. He was the one when he saw Jesus coming towards him cried out, "Here is the Lamb of God that has come to take away the sins of the world." Okay, that's this guy. This isn't some guy that's never heard anything and has big questions. This is a guy who has been convinced and now has questions because of his circumstances where he



John the Baptist in prison

finds himself. He's also the guy that had cried out here is the One who is coming in judgment, who will lay the axe to the root of the tree.¹ He's crying out there will be judgment, and now he's sitting in jail and he's thinking to himself, *This is the epitome of injustice. I'm in a jail cell. I'm the one introducing the Messiah, the Savior of the world for crying out loud; and this king who has done wrong, he's living the high life, he's living his best life now, everything seems all happy for that king.*

John's young, he's in jail, he's been there for a lot of months and now he knows he's going to die and the Messiah has not come in judgment. He has not come with the sword to take care of business. He's got questions, it doesn't make sense; there's injustice, it's unfair, it's not right, and it doesn't line up with what he has expected based on His following Jesus. And I think it'd be irresponsible for him not to drill down on this a little bit deeper.

How is it that when life doesn't go in some directions that you seem to think it would and the circumstances are different, things ended up like this, how is it that I'm going through this right now? Why? When I did what seemed to be the right thing. What's going on with world events? How does that make sense in light of what's happening right now? And then someone tells you the craziest of things and, I mean, some of these things might even be true but in that moment of your suffering of the injustice that you're going through someone's always lined up to say to you, "Maybe it was your sin. Maybe you did something really bad and you're in God's penalty box over here, John." [INAUDIBLE 30:38.3] And maybe that is the case, but it's amazing how people go there right away.

Maybe you have unconfessed sin.

Or maybe, and seems like so often the case, someone's there to tell you, "Well, maybe God is not who you thought He was, and maybe He's not good. And maybe He doesn't know you. And maybe He doesn't have control. And maybe He doesn't care." And this says here John's able to hear what's going on. He's getting reports back that Jesus is out there preaching and teaching and amazing things are happening. He's going, "Are you kidding me?" And then there's always that person that quickly waves off everything who says, "It's all good. God's good, just get over it. You need to quit asking any questions; just be a good, little Christian. If you're a good, little Christian you won't ask any questions."

I'm going to ask you a question today—by the way, I think it's great to ask questions, that's what John does here: Anyone in here, based on life circumstances, what's going on in this world right now, have any questions for Jesus? Anyone online? Yeah, I don't know, there's some sort of emoji that you can put up right now just do it. I don't know enough of that. They make me stand up here for real, so, you do whatever you do online. Are there any hands up in here? You've got some questions. Right? Some stuff just doesn't make sense, it's not lining up. I want us to be okay with that today, and what I want to encourage us today is to go back to our source of truth. I think I put up on the screen go back to your source of truth. By the way, that oftentimes is really a squishy thing, I



¹ See Matthew 3:7-12. Verse 10a (ESV): *Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees.*

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don't want it to be squishy today but I do want you to come to a place where you decide for yourself what your source of truth is. I can tell you what my source of truth is—this Book—which tells me that if I trust in Jesus He gives me His Holy Spirit, and God's Holy Spirit is always working to draw my attention to Jesus. Okay?

So, I can go to this Word, God's Holy Spirit comes into my life, lives with me, resides in me, and I put my attention to Jesus. I will say to each one of us today that I believe that's where you need to be, but I would say to you, you need to decide what your source of truth is going to be and if it's not that, what is it? You just made that up in your head? You're coming up with your own stuff? How's that, how eternal is that? Where are you gonna go with that? We've got to come up with that source of truth. So we go back to our source of truth, and I love what John says, verse 3:

³ and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

– MATTHEW 11:3 (ESV)

And Jesus' response, I don't know, I think I know what my response would be, "Are you kidding Me, John?" You're the one that leapt in your womb. I mean, if you haven't figured it out by now after you leapt in the womb, after we played together as kids, after you have been the one to baptize Me as you're stepping into this, are you kidding Me? Where are we in all of this?" That's probably what I would have said, "Really? Is this where we've come to?" Jesus doesn't do that at all because I believe that Jesus knows that we need to be able to intellectually think through the issues and some of the things of this world are not going to make sense. A sinful, desperately wicked world where a lot of what's going on is going on in the unseen realm of wickedness, and then this opposite battle going on where, you know, we read in the Scriptures where there are actually angel armies battling it out. There's stuff going on that we don't have a clue what's happening, we don't know why it's taking longer, we don't know why certain things are happening around us, we have no sense of mooring on that—we need something to come back to.



And Jesus says to these two disciples that come from John—that he sends to his guys and says, "Go ask Jesus, *Are you the one or should we wait? Is there someone else we ought to be looking for?*"—Jesus says, "I want you to go back and tell John what you see and what you hear." Very important to watch—what is God doing? Hear—what is God saying? You're observing here, guys, you go back and tell him, and here's what I want you to tell them; you go back and you tell him that the blind received their sight, the lame are walking, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor had good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by Me.

⁴ And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

– MATTHEW 11:4-6 (ESV)

Now, when you go to Jesus one of the things I've observed as I've studied Scripture is Jesus—you'll notice this when you read Jesus answers—He doesn't always answer the question or He doesn't always answer it fully. There's stuff that—you know it with your kids—you just can't tell them that yet so you tell them what you *can* tell them and you know there will be a time where you can build on that. In this

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case what Jesus tells John's disciples is look what's happening, look how these people are being blessed, look how these people are being healed. Now here's what Jesus knew—John was a student of His Bible and in the book of Isaiah in a number of different places, specifically in Chapter 61, 750 years before this moment by the way, Isaiah said that when Messiah would come these are the things that would be happening—blind receive their sight, lame walk, lepers cleansed—so when the disciples go back and say that, "We saw that, that's what's going on over there," John goes, "Oh, yeah, that *is* what's happening."

Now let me explain to you why John would be confused here and why this question wasn't fully answered. What John would be seeing at this moment that would be confusing him is in Isaiah in those passages it also speaks of judgment. John's saying I don't understand, he might be thinking, *I don't understand why there isn't judgment taking place*. Here is our mindset, Jesus, and probably their mindset, Jesus comes to this earth. If Jesus is coming and reigning victorious, He gets rid of all the bad guys, all the evil, all the wickedness, all the results of The Fall. He fixes this mess and BOOM! Whew! us good people are left, everything's all good again – because that's how he had read this. Jesus is going to come back, He's going to come back and do all these wonderful things, but He's also going to come back in judgment.

What he did not understand in his study is that Jesus was going to come back first in love and in mercy to a people—all of which are guilty, all of which are a product of The Fall, all who are sinners—and say to all of us, "I'm not going to give you what you deserve. I'm going to offer you grace and I'm going to offer you mercy, and I'm going to stand in your place and I'm going to pay the price that you should pay. I'm going to pay the penalty that you should have paid. I'm going to suffer the death that you should have suffered. And I'm going to offer you grace and mercy and righteousness in exchange. And I'm going to pause and I'm going to keep offering you that. I'm going to offer you peace through the Name of Jesus Christ. Yes, judgment will come, but right now Jesus wanted to offer this first part—grace and mercy and peace—and give everyone listening an opportunity to choose rather than just showing up on the scene.

And I think it's oftentimes the mindset that a lot of people have and it's the problem they have with God because people misunderstand this. They think God's just about ready to come down and hammer them dead, and instead Jesus comes in mercy. So you know there are mercy and grace people, and there are judgment people. There are people that are just like, you know, all mercy, mercy, and all grace, grace, and all love, love, and it's like they don't see anything wrong with anyone or anything and they just want only good things to happen. Other people, it's just like all they want is make sure that you are nailed, that you are caught, that you are busted, that you are put away. And Jesus says listen, that day is coming, I will be coming in judgment.

We're going to get into a series here in a couple months on the end of times and we're going to see Jesus coming back when He comes to judge this world before He reigns and rules victorious over it once and for all. But for right now we live in this awesome moment where we can have the opportunity to believe in Him, to accept his mercy, to accept his grace. And when John hears this answer that presents Jesus in this moment of mercy and grace and kindness and love, he may not understand it fully—but who wants a God that you fully understand? That's no God at all. But he goes okay, I know what I knew, I know what the text says, I know what they say He is doing, and that makes sense to me. And verse 6 I think is one that I would highly recommend you highlight, it says this:

⁶ "And blessed is one who is not offended by me."

– MATTHEW 11:6 (ESV)

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I think if we were to put a title on the last year, last two years, next year or so, the word *offended* is like, I mean, it's almost like everyone ought to be wearing the word *offended* on their T-shirt. I'm offended. I'm offended. *You're kidding me, you said what?! I'm offended.* And I think one of the things you're going to be seeing here in the days ahead is that that offense is going to get much stronger for Christ followers. The Scripture says that's going to happen. There's going to come persecution. That's all been set out and laid down where you're being told what words you're allowed to say, what beliefs you're allowed to have, and so the moment is coming very soon if it's not already here where you're not even going to be allowed to say the Name of Jesus; and where if you say the Name of Jesus that will be a huge offense.



First Corinthians says the cross is a stumbling block to those who are perishing,² and the best thing those who want to say no to it and don't want to believe can do is to say, "You're offending me by even saying

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,
but we preach Christ crucified,
a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,



1 CORINTHIANS 1:22-23

the Name of Jesus." You know, you're not going to wear that cross, you're not going to put that cross up, you're not going to say the Name of Jesus, you're not going to mention I prayed about that, you're not going to mention that Jesus helped you through a tough time. No, you're not going to say that because that's offensive talk. And many today who hang around the fringes of church are going to say, "Oh, yeah, I don't want to offend you because we've been taught we're not allowed to offend anyone." Jesus said, "***And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.***"

John, I wonder if John was easily offended because I think it's fascinating it throws that verse in there. Or if Jesus just knows that's just, maybe that's not a big deal in our time, maybe that's always been a big deal and everyone's all offended by everything. I don't know. I haven't lived long enough; at least I'm pretending to say I haven't. Saying to John, "John, yeah, people are going to be offended by Me" – by Jesus. You're going to be happy by not being offended, just speak it out, say out the Name of Jesus, preach the Name of Jesus, keep on saying it, keep proclaiming this is the Lamb of God who came to save men from their sins. Oh, you talk about offense—I'm not a sinner! Well, I'm not *that* bad. Well, what do you think about me? Wait a minute, why do I need Jesus, why not anything else? Want some something else? No. Don't be offended by Me.

When John gets all this back the thing that he has to do is he has to decide to align his thinking with the answer Jesus gave. You see, one of the things we know is the Bible is always right, and when you get your answer from this Book you're going to have to decide—is this my source of truth or not? Am I going to align my thinking to it or am I going to say, "Yeah, you know what, this is an old Book. This was written in other times." You know, the Bible is always right. And, again, that's why we start here by stating very clearly what our source of truth is, and why we need to get to a place where we even say to people we talk to and they ask us for our opinion.

I was asked this here recently, they said, "You know, I'm in a work space and in a lot of the interactions I have people are asking me questions that need to be answered spiritually but I'm not allowed to say

² Transcriber edit/correction: "Romans" is stated in the video but the only mention of "stumbling block" in Romans appears in Chapter 14, verse 13, which doesn't fit the sermon context: ***Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.*** Correct reference is 1st Corinthians 1:18 (ESV): ***For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.***

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Jesus, I'm not allowed to say God, I'm not allowed to talk about the Bible or I'm going to get written up. That's a hard one, so we talked about that. He was like, "What do you do? You're going to get fired?" He said, "Well, take one for Jesus." Well, great, now what? Okay, gotta get another job. Seems like a little bit better boss and then you get fired there. Pretty soon, you know, it's like, now do I have a job? And you're like, "Well, shouldn't you be willing to take that?" Or are there other ways in which we can do this where you're going, "No, I'm not going to be offended by Jesus, but is there a way for me to say to the person, *Hey, listen, I know we're not allowed to answer the question on spiritual grounds here,*

Ban on using the NAME of Jesus in America

www.heisnear.com/BanOnJesusName.html

Navy Chaplain Censored: 'Don't pray in the name of Jesus ...

<https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/navy-chaplain-censored-dont-pray-in-the-na>

Police Chaplains Told Not to Pray in Jesus' Name - The ...

<https://www.christianpost.com/news/police-chaplains-told-not-to-pray-in-j>

Men Not Allowed to Say 'Jesus' in Chaplain Class: Lawsuit ...

<https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/men-accuse-va-of-religious-persecution/>

School: You may not recite prayer in the name of Jesus ...

<https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/school-you-may-not-recite-prayer-in-the>

Jesus Sign Is a No Go in Public School Classroom | Thomas ...

<https://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/faith-matters/2015/02/02/jesus-sign>

Military Chaplains Sue After Being Ordered Not to Quote ...

<https://christiannews.net/2013/11/10/military-chaplains-sue-after-being-ordered->

Offended by the Name of Jesus

can I give you from my basis? They have a bias, you have a bias, they have a foundation for truth, you have a foundation for truth—you lay that out there and get that permission. You get that permission, you move on and you share it. You don't get that permission, it's like, okay, so you want to meet afterwards?

I talked to someone not too long ago, works for a big company you're familiar with, he says, "We are not under any, any, any, any, any circumstance allowed to share anything about Jesus." As I was saying this permission thing to him, he's like, "Yeeah, that doesn't work, but," he says, "you know what? They don't own the coffee shop at lunchtime. I can say what I want at lunch at the coffee shop down the street." At a given point we have to align our thinking with God's truth.

Jesus says to John don't be offended by Me. I get it you don't understand why you're—by the way, do you realize, okay, Jesus is out there healing and doing all these things, John's sitting locked up, all Jesus has to do is say to his two disciples, "Oh, by the way, go back and check now, he's not in there anymore." [HE STEPS SIX FEET LEFT OF PODIUM – AUDIENCE VIEWPOINT] I'm over here thinking that's exactly what's going to happen. I mean, here's the guy raising people from the dead, He surely can open up the jail cell. He can surely have the jailer go, "Hey, um, they've signed a release, you're clear, you're good to go. Have a nice day." He's like [FIST PUMPS/ARMS WAVING], "Oh! Jesus!" He doesn't do that! [RETURNS TO PODIUM AT CENTER STAGE] Go tell him don't be offended on behalf of Me. [WALKS BACK OVER LEFT OF PODIUM] Keep proclaiming Jesus over here. They're going to cut off his head! [THROWS HIS ARMS UP] I don't understand. I don't fully get it.

I don't understand why lives are taken at a young age. This guy John, at the max he's 30. Someone fact check me³ and find me, oh, I don't know, he's probably a little older or younger, whatever. This is an amazing teacher! This is a guy who knows truth. This is a prophet of God. He's only 30? He's got a good 60 years left in him, why would that get cut short? Does anyone in here think that makes any

³ Fact Check: According to Luke 3:23 (ESV), Jesus began his ministry "**about thirty years of age.**" Luke Chapter 1 foretells the birth of John the Baptist who would be the forerunner of Jesus and also foretells the birth of Jesus. Regarding John the Baptist in his mother's womb, verse 26 states, "**In the six month the angel Gabriel was sent from God**" to a virgin named Mary. This indicates that John would be at a minimum 6 months older than Jesus. Thus, if Jesus began His ministry at about 30 years of age, then John would have been 30-31 at the time of his imprisonment and beheading.

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sense? Jesus says don't be offended by Me, Jesus doesn't let him go, and it's a– I don't know, to me it's so helpful to realize, wait a minute, there's a given point where I have to just go back to God's Word and see how God has worked, how Jesus has responded to similar situations that we're in where we're going, "This makes no sense. This doesn't feel right. The timing on this is good."



Um, hey listen, this is why I started out with questions. There is, oh, what do they call it in our time – echo chamber. You know, we come into this room, we all say the same thing, we all nod our head, yeah, that's good, that's good, thanks, Lee, and we leave. No one asks any questions because to do so we think, "Oh, that's the big, bad Pharisees, they asked the bad questions and Jesus gets upset with them and He's going to be upset at me." And this passage here is going to tell you no-no-no-no, He's not going to get upset at you, stop it. He wants you to ask that question.

And, in fact, what I would encourage us to do is ask the hard questions. That's why we beg you to jump into a group. It's not because we want to have a lot of groups because we want the bigger egg and we want lots and lots and lots of groups. We're not setting any success standard based on this. What we know is that I say a bunch of stuff here today and it's bringing up questions [SNAPS HIS FINGERS IN THE AIR] and you've got a list of them right now as a result of even what I've said today. Because you have situations just like John's, it's not a jail or maybe it's a jail situation, it's a relational issue, it's a sickness issue, whatever, that doesn't make sense when we worship a God of miracles but there's no miracles happening there. We have all sorts of questions. And that's why we say get into a group where you get around to other bunch of believers.

Our staff gathers every week and goes over these Scriptures together before we come in here and it's so fun because someone will pose a question and, you know, I don't know all the answers and Pastor John, well, he knows most of them but, um, and then all of a sudden someone will give a Scripture or someone will give insight and we're like, "That's it! Yes!" And that's why we need each other to be able to drill down. That's why I encourage you be reading your Bible every day. It's why I encourage you just, when you're praying say, "God, I need insight. I need help. I need an answer." It's amazing how often those answers come quickly when we do so, but I think oftentimes we just sort of stuff it and we just sort of give some fluffy thing out here.



And here's why I'm bringing all this up, here's what I'm concerned about. We often make this comment about university students when they go off to university they lose their faith, it's because someone else gives their opinion and they've been taught just go along with it. Or this person's opinion seems so profound and they sort of mock, "Oh, you came from the religion world? Oh, yeah-yeah, your parents did that whole church thing. Oh, yeah-yeah-yeah-yeah, we know better here. We have the facts up here." You go, "Oh, yeah, good point." And then they walk away from Jesus because we were never willing to ask the hard questions here. And I just beg us to ask the hard questions here, and really, ask us.

Be very careful when you hear things to say, "Does that even make sense?" and to be able to drill down on that a little bit deeper and say, "Can that be true?" You know, it's a few years ago but I use it because it, uh, you're familiar with it, you know, there's a guy that "went to Hell" for eight minutes and came back and wrote a book⁴ eight minutes in Hell. Really? You see to me that doesn't make sense. My mind starts – I have all sorts of questions when you say that. Okay, um, that kid that went to Heaven

⁴ Fact Check: The [book](#) is *23 Minutes in Hell: One Man's Story About What He Saw, Heard, and Felt in that Place of Torment* by Bill Wiese.

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and came back and told what his grandpa looked like and stuff like that.⁵ The Apostle Paul in my Bible says, you know, he went and he saw things he can't even speak of⁶ and yet, you know, this kid goes and he comes back and gives us all this stuff and he writes a lot of books.



I'm going to switch gears on you for just a minute, but hold that thought for just a moment. I want to just go to these next verses because when you come to asking questions you may be sure. I'm not still sure if I, I – how does Jesus feel about this? When these two disciples go away to go back to John to talk to John, Jesus steps up and it's as if He addresses the people that are standing around watching. And He begins to talk about John and what I want you to hear, the big picture, is He says really good things about John. You see, they might have been thinking, *Oh, boy, what's Jesus going to say?* He goes, "I want to tell you this guy, I want to tell you who he is," and then He begins to talk about him as a prophet. He says when this guy was out there speaking in the wilderness, did you want a prophet who was like a reed shaken by the wind?

Now, when you hear the word *prophet* I want to hear something that is a word from [HOLDS UP HIS BIBLE] God; that I know it's a word from God. You know, you see the phrase a lot in your Bible – "*thus saith the Lord*"⁷ – I want someone that when they're speaking, they're speaking something I know that is truth from God, not some [PLACES HAND TO EAR AS IF HE'S HEARING FROM GOD] "Yes. Okay. Yes. God's telling me right now that I'm to..." Stop it! Because half the time it turns out it doesn't even turn out to be true and you're following, and then another guy says something different. And Jesus says this is a guy that comes out there and he speaks the truth. And He says hey, were you looking for a guy to come out there in soft, pretty clothing and look really nice? No. You know what, you loved this man.



Yes. Okay. Yes. God's telling me...

You remember me reading that in Chapter 3⁸ how he was dressed and what he ate. This was a guy that he's getting your attention because he's saying it the way it is and he's saying the hard thing. And as I read this I am just so reminded in our time there is a hunger, and the Scripture says in the end times there's going to be all sorts of people out there trying to tickle their itching ears,⁹ trying to hear the things they want to hear, hear all the little stories they want to hear. So you laugh and joke around and mess around and they think, *Oh, I got my religion for the day.* And Jesus says listen, when a man of God shows up at the door—and He says that's who this guy, John, was—he's going to speak the truth, he's going to say thus says the Lord. Right down here in verse 10 He makes this comment, two things that He says here that I think is so important. He says:

¹⁰ This is he of whom it is written,¹⁰

⁵ Fact Check: *The Boy Who Went to Heaven* [retracted his story](#) in 2015 and the Christian publisher pulled the book.

⁶ Reference 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 (ESV): *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.*

⁷ "*Thus saith the Lord*" appears 413 times in the KJV, according to a keyword search at BibleGateway.com. "*Thus says the Lord*" appears 415 times in the ESV. All mentions are in the Old Testament.

⁸ Matthew 3:4 (ESV): *Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.*

⁹ 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (ESV): *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*

¹⁰ Jesus is quoting from Malachi 3:1 (ESV): *Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.*

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*"Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you."*

— In other words, Jesus is saying God sent him; he was a called person. God sent him and called him to do His work. I'm going to jump ahead to verse 11, He says this:

¹¹ "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

— MATTHEW 11:10-11 (ESV)

It hit me this week, John did not have a life plan. Everywhere I go, and it's fine, I've got my own little list and this kind of thing, but everyone's like, "You need to get a life plan." John didn't have a life plan, he had a calling. God had called him; called him into his ministry, called him to do what he had to do. You know, wait a minute, age 28, age 30, and he's done? Hey, when God's done He's done! God knows what He needs. God knows how He wants it done. God knows what's going to be accomplished. We're still talking about him 2,000 years later. God had a plan. God had a calling. And so rather than me having *my* life plan that I try to fulfill, I believe God has a calling for each and every one of us and we just need to figure out what that is and do it.

And I believe strongly—it's why I preach the way I do—is that God's calling is not just on the person like myself that stands up front. And I believe that's why Jesus was speaking to the crowd at that point letting them know this guy's called, [POINTS OUT ACROSS THE AUDIENCE] you're called, you're called, you're called, you're called. And then He says, what I think is next, He says John is the greatest. I mean, the guy in jail is the greatest? The guy not able to go do his thing is the greatest? The guy whose life plan has just been cut short is the greatest?

You know as I listened to, as I heard that, oh, yeah, everyone's telling me, you know, what would success look like? Success would look like Jesus saying, "Well done." And to get into that spot I'm going to have to submit to His plan for my life. I'm going to have to keep on going to this place. And when I end up someplace I had never expected to be, I need to go and ask Him, "Jesus, what's going on?" and let Him speak to me. And some of you are in that spot that was not where you expected to be. Right now is a time to submit to Him and come into position with Him and let Him do His thing. Greatness is determined by Jesus.



I'm going to switch gears with you again. We just talked about John the Baptist. The Scriptures tell us a little bit about what he was doing, what Jesus instituted when he came down to the water and said, "John, I need you to baptize Me." In the book of Romans, Chapter 6,¹¹ there's a description of baptism. We believe here at Calvary this is the first step of obedience in our faith, and one of the reasons I want to bring this up today is a whole bunch of people have been getting saved at Calvary recently. It's like every week one, two, three people getting saved and that just, as you know, that's part of our mission is what – when I say mission it's what Jesus told us to do: Go reach people and help them grow in their faith. And so the first step of growing in their faith is to get baptized. And the descriptions in Romans Chapter 6, verse 3, listen to these words:

³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus

— placed into Christ Jesus —

¹¹ Transcriber edit/correction: In the video he states Chapter 3; it's actually verse 3 of Chapter 6, which he later cites correctly.

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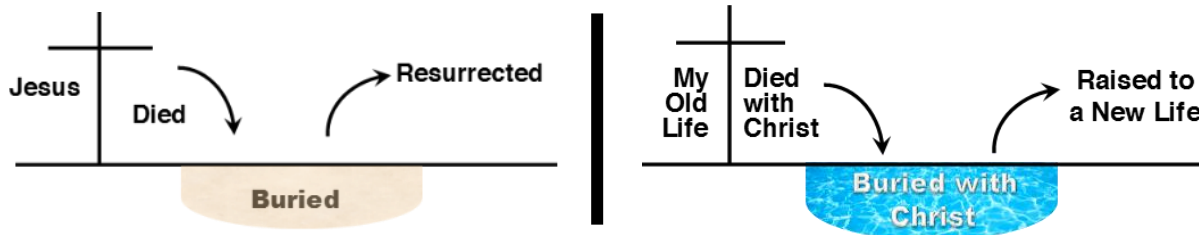
were baptized into his death?

— so we become part of that death

⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

– ROMANS 6:3-4 (ESV)

So we, we become like Jesus and we line up with Jesus and we become part of what He went through. And when we go into the waters of baptism we are joining Him in His death and we are being buried with Him.



And that's the picture, we're actually picturing the Gospel that Jesus died, He was buried to take away our sins and to forgive us, and when He came up out of that grave victorious we come up out of the water and we walk into newness of life living our lives for Jesus. When we do so we are shouting out to

the world what has happened inside of us. Baptism doesn't save us, that would be a work, the Bible says no works save us, only by the grace of God, but we are shouting out to the world that something has changed inside of us and that we have put our faith and trust in Jesus alone for our salvation.

And I would like to this morning invite as many of you as possible to get baptized that have never been baptized before. You're like, *Um, yeah, I didn't plan on that.* We have fixed that for you. We have shorts, we have shirts, we have towels, I'll bet you we even have hair dryers. I don't know, they've got the whole nine yards back there.

We have our baptismal tank in the Café today right outside this door and as soon as the service is over I'm going to invite us all to go out there and be a part of this baptism and cheer on those

who are getting baptized. We had a bunch of you baptized first hour, would love to see a bunch of you follow Jesus in this way in obeying Him this hour and say, "Yeah, I'm in. I'm in. Wherever this walk

For it is by grace

[God's remarkable compassion and favor drawing you to Christ]

that you have been saved

[actually delivered from judgment and given eternal life]

through faith. And this

[salvation]

is not of yourselves

[not through your own effort],

but it is the

[undeserved, gracious]

gift of God; not as a result of

[your]

works

[nor your attempts to keep the Law],

so that no one will

[be able to]

boast or take credit in any way

[for his salvation].

– EPHESIANS 2:8-9 (AMP)

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with you, Jesus, goes, I'm in. And I just want everyone to see, I want to shout it out." People posted online already, people posting on Facebook shouting out to the world, "No, I'm not offended by Jesus. I'm happy because I am shouting out the Name of Jesus."

So what I'm going to do is I'm going to ask you – would you, when we start singing this next song as Jesse leads us here, would you just come up here? Pastor John will stand at the front door there [POINTS TO HIS RIGHT], he's going to just lead you into the green room, it's a big room back there, nothing scary back there, and they will just talk to you and they're going to ask you if you put your faith in Jesus. They might ask you why are you wanting to get baptized today. Here's the right answer, hear me, listen carefully, "Because I put my faith and trust in Jesus alone for my salvation. I've trusted in Jesus. I've trusted in Jesus, nothing else, not my works, nothing else, I'm trusting Jesus for my salvation." And then they'll ask you a little bit of your story and then bring you out here to be baptized. They'll get you a pair of shorts and a shirt and you're baptized.

You say, "You know what, probably ought to wait on this, it's a cold day out there." We've – we've already have gone over this. You say, "Well, maybe I ought to wait because my family's not here." You know what, um, this isn't about your family following you, this is about you following Jesus Christ in obedience. You say, "You know what, I was sprinkled (dipped, touched, whatever) when I was a baby" (or an infant or this or that). The Bible talks about this being something that you decide as an adult when you proclaim your faith. It's not a Calvary thing, I mean, it's a thing, it's a Christ follower thing that you personally make a decision to follow Christ, so I'm gonna invite you into this today. And if you just got saved here recently, this is your next step. If you got saved a bunch of years ago, you've just never done it, come on, let's do it today and it'll be a memorable thing. And then afterwards just post it out there on social media, it's going to be exciting. So let me say a word of prayer.

Lord Jesus,

I pray for those right now that are deciding to do that and just follow You in this next step of obedience. I pray that You'll just give them the boldness to do that right now, and I pray that the rest of us would be super encouraged by it. I ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.



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