

CONNECTIONS TABLE & STICKERS

- New in the last couple months?
- Blue decal stickers for everyone!

INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to Matthew chapter 11. Matthew 11. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to Matthew 11. If you open one of the hard-backed black bibles under your seat, Matthew 11 will be on page **816**.

INTRODUCTION: DOUBT

Now, today's text has been one of the most formative stories in the scriptures in my faith journey.

I heard a sermon on this passage more than 10 years ago,

- and you ever just have a sermon blow you up?
- That's what that sermon did for me.

Here's why this is so meaningful to me: it's a passage about doubting God.

- So, this summer I am celebrating my 20th spiritual birthday.
- It was the summer of 2001 that I got saved.
- But here's what I know after two decades of following Jesus...
 - there have been seasons in my life
 - where I have wrestled with doubt.

Cause, by nature, I'm kinda a skeptic. And there have been many times where I've found myself here:

- *'Look, I want to believe!'*
- *I really want to believe in Jesus, but I've got questions!'*

Questions like:

- Doesn't the Bible seem to contradict itself?
- How does it reckon with history?
- And some of this stuff is just hard to believe:
 - Like a worldwide flood?
 - And God just saved one family and animals two-by-two?
 - Really?
- Or what about the Bible's sexual ethic?
- Or what about hell?
- Or evolution?
- Or explain T-Rex to me? Where does he fit into this stuff?
- Or how about this one:
 - if God is so loving,
 - why is there so much pain in the world?

Today we're talking about doubts.

Now, what I'd like to be able to give you is:

- five steps to eradicate your doubts.
- That's what I'd like to do,
- but if I tried that, I'd be a liar!

You see,

- if there were just 5 easy steps to destroy doubts,
- man, I wouldn't have wrestled so much
- in the last two decades of following Christ.
 - I would have taken those steps...
 - and I wouldn't have doubted...
 - and I would have written a book...
 - and I'd have a boat.

You see, I don't think there exists some easy formula or steps to take to get rid of all your spiritual doubts.

TRANSITION

But I am calling this sermon **SLIDE DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'**.

- Yes, the Journey song...
- another 80s reference.

Because our passage today has helped me immensely in the midst of my own doubts to continue believing in God.

So, let's dig in Matthew 11, starting in verse 2:

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MATTHEW 11:2

[2] Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples

EXPLAIN: JOHN THE BAPTIST

Now, let me frame this up. Today we come to John the Baptist.

- John was what's known as the 'forerunner' of the Messiah.

In the Old Testament,

- it was predicted that before the Messiah would come
- there would come one who would prepare the way for him.
- This is John the Baptist.

And John was remarkable in a number of ways...

starting that he was Jesus' cousin.

EXPLAIN: MIRACLE BABY

But in Luke chapter 1 it says that John's mother, Elizabeth, was **barren and advanced in years.**

So, John was legitimately a miracle baby.

- Everyone tells their kids that they're special.
- but when John's parents told him he was special,
- they actually meant it!
- They had angels telling them about their son
 - before he was born.
- They were way too old...
 - And yet, they conceived a child.

So, he's a miracle!

EXPLAIN: OBEDIENT

And John is unbelievably obedient to his call as the forerunner of Christ.

- It meant that he was going to be homeless,
- he was going to live in the woods,
- and wear animal skins,
- and eat bugs and honey,
- and never touch a drop of wine or alcohol...
- essentially, he's going to be a picture of radical obedience,
- in order to call people to repentance.

And John goes, *"Alright! Let's go!"*

That's a high level of obedience. That's more obedient than you!

That's far more obedient than me! Ok?

- Goodness, if God came to me and said,
- *"I want you to be a homeless preacher."*
- I'm pretty sure I'd be like,
 - *"Look, I'm going to need an audible voice*
 - *coming out of something burning*
 - *yet not being consumed. Alright?"*
- And...I'm gonna need you to talk to my wife,
- cause she ain't gonna bite on this!
 - And I don't think this is time to pull the Ephesians 5,
 - wives submit, card.

EXPLAIN: BAPTIZES JESUS

- So, he's a miracle child,
- he has a thriving ministry...

And one day, Jesus shows up to where John is baptizing,

- and John says,
- ***"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."***
 - *This is the one I've been telling y'all about!"*
- And Jesus tells John to baptize Him.

And so, he baptizes Jesus!

- And when Jesus comes up out of the waters
- the heavens are opened
- and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove
- and the audible voice of God was heard.

Listen, I've baptized a lot of people in my ministry, but I've never had a response like that.

- No doves fluttering through
- or audible voices from heaven.

EXPLAIN: HEROD

So, John is legit!

- He's a miracle child.
- He's unbelievably obedient to God.
- He had a thriving ministry.
- He even got to baptize the Son of God.
- And he actually heard the audible voice of God.

If there is any varsity level Christ follower, it's John the Baptist.

But as John continues in his ministry...

- he starts confronting Herod,
 - the ruler in that region,
- who had taken his brother's wife
- and was having an affair with her.

Well, Herod didn't like that, so,

- he had John seized,
- and bound him,
- and throws that dude in the dungeon.

We read about that in Matthew 4.

And that's where he's at in our story.

- John is in prison,
- we don't know how long he's been there,
- but he's hearing about the deeds of the Christ...
- and so, he sends his disciples to ask him a question.

Verse 3:

MATTHEW 11:3

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

EXPLAIN: QUESTIONS

Can you picture this scene?

- John the Baptist,
- the forerunner to the Messiah,
- miracle child,
- obedient to the Lord,
- baptizes Jesus...

But where does all this lead to? It lands him in prison.

He's gotta be thinking,

- *"This isn't how this is supposed to happen!*
- *I was faithful.*
- *I shouldn't be here.*
- *Wait...was he really the messiah?"*

So, he sends his crew to Jesus, and asks,

- *"Hey, are you really the one?*
- *I mean, I've been obedient.*
- *I've followed faithfully.*
- *But this isn't playing out how I thought it would.*
- *Are you the one, or is there another?*
- *Are you really the Christ?*
- *Are you really the Messiah?*
- *Are you really the Lamb of God who takes away our sins?*
- *Or was this all just a farse?"*

Can you hear his doubts?

Now, if John the Baptist...

- who Jesus will go on to call
- the greatest of those born of women...
- if he can have a season of doubt,
- and question if Jesus is who he said he was...
- don't you think we might doubt as well?

And it's the first point about doubts I wanna make:

SLIDE IT'S OK TO DOUBT

John goes,

- *"This doesn't add up..."*
- *this doesn't make sense...*
- *this isn't working out like I thought it should..."*

But John doesn't...

- freak out.

He doesn't...

- run from his beliefs.

He doesn't

- give up on the things he thought were true.
- No!

IT'S OK TO DOUBT.

And John goes,

- *"I'm going to send word to Jesus..."*
- *I've gotta talk to him."*

He goes to Jesus with his doubts.

Man, sometimes Christians make doubting out to be a sin, or a problem, or even something of a cuss word. As if there's something wrong with you if you doubt!

- But Jesus, in response to his cousin's doubts,
- He doesn't berate him!
- He doesn't get frustrated with him.
- He doesn't say, "*Oh ye of little faith!*"
- He's not like,
 - "*Am I the one?!?*"
 - *Are you kidding me?*
 - *Do you remember my baptism?*
 - *Do you remember that voice?*
 - *Do you remember the dove?*
 - *Are you kidding me, John?*"

No, he doesn't. IT'S OK TO DOUBT.

And Jesus DOES answer John's question, but in a strange way.

Let's look at it: verse 4:

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MATTHEW 11:4-5

[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.

EXPLAIN: LIST

Leave it to Jesus not to give a direct YES or NO answer, right?

- He couldn't have just said,
 - *"Yeah...I'm the one!"*
- But in the Jewish culture at that time,
- his answer was even better than a direct yes or no.

You see, Jewish boys like John, had much of the scriptures memorized.

So, when Jesus begins to list all these things that are happening in his ministry.

- The blind receive sight,
- the lame walk,
- lepers are cleansed,
- the deaf hear...

If you're a 1st century Jew you're probably going,

- *"Wait! I know this list!"*
- That's because Jesus is looking back to the Old Testament.
- He's compiling prophecy from the book of Isaiah.

And scholars point out

- that in Isaiah 26, 29, 35, 42 & 61,
- all of these things that Jesus just listed
- are from prophecies that were about
- the one who was to come.
- The Messiah.

So, Jesus answer is essentially:

"John...I am the one! Look at what I've done! There will be no other."

TRANSITION

Now, this would be a nice place to stop...because I could just say,

- *“Hey, be like John!*
- *Go to Jesus with your doubts,*
- *and he will answer you!*
- *He is the one!”*

But then he adds verse 6. Matthew 11:6

MATTHEW 11:6

[6] And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

EXPLAIN: JOHN’S RESPONSE

Now, hold on...what does that mean?

Well, remember those messianic prophecies from the book of Isaiah?

We aren’t told John’s response, but I imagine it went something like this:

- When John’s disciples come back to him
- and begin to run through the list,
- John probably got up from his seat:
 - *“Yeah. I see what he’s doing here.*
 - *Jesus IS the one.”*

And while they list off all the stuff that Jesus is doing...

I bet John is remembering Isaiah, and is like,

- *“Oh yeah!*

- *The blind see,*
- *the lame walk,*
- *the deaf hear,*
- *the dead are raised...*
- *yes, yes, yes...*
- *I know what's coming next!"*

Because John knows his Old Testament.

And his disciples end with **the poor have good news preached to them.**

And John must have said:

- *"That's it?*
- *Are you sure?*
- *He didn't say anything else?*
- *Did you miss something?"*

Because if you read the Isaiah accounts there is one more thing listed that the messiah would do. Actually, if you're doing the Fathom Bible reading plan, you read this week, Isaiah 42, where it is prophesized of the messiah: **He would bring out the prisoners from the dungeon.**

- Jesus failed to mention release from prison.
- John's disciples didn't miss something.
- Jesus just didn't say it.

And then Jesus says, **"And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."**

And it's my second point this morning.

- IT'S OK TO DOUBT
 - and
- **SLIDE SUFFERING CAN INCREASE OUR DOUBTS**

EXPLAIN: JOHN'S REALITY

Now this is where this one gets real for us...cause this is where we enter in and say,

- *“Well, surely Jesus meant to add that and just forgot it, right?”*
- *It must be a miscommunication.*
- *Cause he is the one...*
- *and John has been his faithful servant.*
- *He's done everything he has asked him to do.*
- *He's been obedient.*
- *He's a good person.*
- *So, surely it's all gonna work out.”*

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Well, it doesn't work out that way for John. Because in Matthew chapter 14 we find this story.

- After about a year of being imprisoned in Herod's dungeon,
- on Herod's birthday there is a rager of a party.

And just so you know how twisted Herod is,

- his brother's wife,
 - who Herod is having an affair with,
- sends her teenage daughter into to Herod
- to do an erotic dance,
- and Herod is so pleased with the little striptease
- that he promises her anything she wants as a gift.

And so, prompted by her mother,

- who didn't like John calling them out
 - for their extra-marital affair
 - any more than Herod did,
- tells her to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter.

And John the Baptist...

- the cousin of Jesus Christ.
- The miracle child.
- The one who baptized Jesus
- and heard the audible voice of God.
- The one who did everything right.

Is brought up out of the dungeon and into a party filled with drunkenness and debauchery.

- And he sees Herod,
- and his mistress,
- and a scantily clad teenage girl...
- and his head is pushed down onto a chopping block...
- and an executioner takes his sword...
- and cuts off the head of John the Baptist...
- puts it on a plate...
- and hands the plate to the girl...
- to the cheers of the party-goers.

And thus ends the life of the greatest among those born of women.

Blessed is the one who is not offended by me.

APPLICATION

Does this bother anybody else?

I don't know about you, but this resonates with me deeply.

- I mean, I'm still a relatively young man,
- and I've only been walking with the Lord for 20 years,
- but when I first gave my life over
- to love and serve and follow Jesus
- I just assumed it meant that
 - if I would just do what I was told,
 - and follow God's command,
 - and do it right...
 - then my life was going to turn out ok.

Like, I just assumed life would work out,

- and I'd prosper,
- and I wouldn't significantly suffer,
- and I would have my doubts and questions answered.

Why does Jesus say **Blessed is the one who is not offended by me?**

I think he says that because

- **if you believe the myth...**
 - **that much of popularized evangelicalism is feeding you,**
- **that Jesus is all about your health, and wealth, and happiness**
- **it WILL NOT be enough to sustain your faith**
- **when sufferings, that Jesus promises are coming, come.**

ILLUSTRATION: STOP SINNING

You see, when I first became a Christian I really tried to do some work on cleaning up my life.

- I started doing all the things I could do to get “right” with God.
- But as I was doing those things I became really frustrated
- Because as I tried to clean up sin over here,
 - it showed up over there in my life.
- And just when I got this thing figured out,
 - well, this other thing would get out of whack.

And I found myself just constantly struggling NOT TO SIN!

- But I wanted to stop!
- And I can remember being like,
 - *“God, what are you doing here!?!”*
 - *I’m trying to follow you,*
 - *and I’m trying to put sin to death.*
 - *Why can’t I figure this out?”*

DIVORCE

And then right after graduating college I got my first job in a church as a youth pastor. And I was excited to serve the Lord in vocational ministry.

- And not two months went by into my new job
- I met my dad for dinner
- and he told me that he and my mom were getting a divorce.
 - And it knocked the wind out of my lungs.

- I was giving my life up to be a vocational pastor.
- I was being faithful to his call on my life,
- and this is what happens...

Aren't things supposed to go well now that I am in ministry?

HEALTH

And a year or so later I married Maryse. And we did things right, you know:

- we did pre-marital counseling,
- and we stayed sexually pure for each other,
- and after the wedding we started prayed together every day,
- and pursued each other actively,
- and committed to love each other well.

But about a year into our marriage, Maryse got sick.

- And after weeks of not getting better...
- we went to the doctor.
- And then the second doctor.
- And then a third.
- And a fourth.
- And on and on and on...
- with no answers,
- and no relief for my wife.

And after all the “normal” things were ruled out...

- they began the tests for the scary stuff.
 - Tumors,
 - auto-immune disorders,
 - cancer,
 - life-long sufferings.

And I can vividly remember...

- being 24 years old...
- sitting in the waiting room at the hospital
- while Maryse was having a brain MRI looking for brain tumors,
- and praying to God,
 - *“God this isn’t what is supposed to happen to us!*
 - *We’re trying to follow you in our marriage.*
 - *In sickness or in health.*
 - *But that sickness stuff...*
 - *wasn’t supposed to apply in our 20s.*
 - *That wasn’t supposed to come until much later!”*

My life was supposed to be going better than this.

CANCER

And then my mom got a terminal cancer diagnosis.

MISCARRIAGE

And then Maryse miscarried with our first child.

CHURCH

And then I planted this church, the great joy of my ministry!

- Only to find it to be one of the most
- spiritually challenging things I've ever done.

Cause now I'VE been with friends at Children's Hospital in the NICU.

And they've called me in, THEIR PASTOR, to pray.

- And I've prayed over little ones
 - who have no medical hope
 - other than a miracle of God.
- And I'll pray for God to heal,
- trusting that he can,
- and wondering why...
- sometimes he doesn't.

And when you're the pastor, you live on the edge of being loved or being hated.

And I've had people, who I've loved and been deeply committed to,

- turn on me,
- and hate me,
- and curse me,
- and walk away.

And it's like,

- *"God, this is not how it's supposed to be.*
- *This isn't what I thought it would be like!"*

Blessed is the one who is not offended by me.

APPLICATION

Jesus is telling John the Baptist.

- *“What if you never get out of that prison?”*
- *Am I still enough for you?”*

And it's my final point this morning: **SLIDE JESUS IS ENOUGH.**

- IT'S OK TO DOUBT.
- And SUFFERING CAN INCREASE OUR DOUBTS.
- But in the end, JESUS IS ENOUGH.

Man, I know we need to hear this here today, church.

- When the job you thought was secure, falls through,
 - Jesus is enough.
- When everyone else is married, but you are alone,
 - Jesus is enough.
- When your marriage isn't all you dreamed it should be,
 - Jesus is enough for that.
- When you get that phone call that suddenly changes your whole life. Someone has died, or somebody has cancer, or somebody's leaving you.
 - Jesus is enough.
- When that sin that you're trying to beat won't go away,
 - Jesus is enough.
- When you can't seem to get this Christian thing figured out,
 - Jesus is enough.

And I don't mean that to minimize any of those sufferings.

- No, I'm saying that through the deepest possible pain...
 - through tears
 - and snot
 - and heaving
 - and weeping...
- we can cry out that Jesus is enough.

ENDING

So,

- if in the last week,
- or the last month,
- or the last year,
- or maybe even for many years...

You've been going,

- *"Where are you?!?"*
- *Have you abandoned me?!?"*
- *I thought you were with me.*
- *I thought you were for me.*
- *Where are you!?!?"*

If that's where you're at I want to tell you that

Jesus is enough for you in that doubt.

AND I would also just lay before you

- that maybe it's no coincidence
- that you are here on this morning
- when we're preaching this story from Matthew 11...
- that God might just be addressing your doubts today.

You may not have any answers to your questions yet...

But maybe this morning he's saying to you,

- *"I am the one, there will be no other.*
- *And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."*

DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'. God help us.

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES USED:

- Carson, D.A. Matthew: The Expositor's Bible Commentary.
- Chandler, Matt. *Dealing With Doubt*.
- Comer, John Mark. *We're All Thomas Now*.
- Martin, Joby. *Loudmouth Week 1: Doubts*.
- Osborne, Grant R. Matthew: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.
- Strauch, Alex. *Jesus and John the Baptist*.