

## Matthew 11: 2-11

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*December 13, 2007*

He was sitting there thinking. He had a lot of time to do just that. Actually he was worrying not just about his future but about the future. Had he been right about the whole thing? Had he been right about him? Could he have been mistaken all this time? Things sure didn't look like he had it right. Things should be a lot better. Or at least, things should be happening, earth shaking things. It would be more turbulent than the 60's. His situation right now would certainly be a lot better. He wouldn't be in prison. Or some plan might be in the works, to get him out to save him.

He thought back to the stories his mother had told him; how he had jumped in the womb when his mother, greeted Mary. Mary was pregnant with Jesus when she greeted her. His mother was also pregnant. She was in the 6<sup>th</sup> month of her 8 months of pregnancy.

Ever since then he had known, at least he thought he had known that Jesus was the messiah. Shoot there was even that time when he baptized him. Some one had said they heard a voice from heaven say, ***"This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."*** But now he wondered if he had been wrong the whole time.

It sure didn't look like the way he had envisioned it would be like when Messiah came. How had he envisioned it would be like? He wasn't sure he remembered.

He had told the crowd. I am baptizing you with water for repentance but one is coming who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. What had he meant when he said that? Did he mean that Messiah would burn the sinners up, those who didn't repent? or did it mean he would burn their sins away? Isaiah had said (Isaiah 34:8) For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of vindication by Zion's cause.

And then in (Isaiah 35:4) Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."

Should John be strong and without fear? Will Jesus save him?

Maybe we haven't been in prison but we know what it's like to live in a world where things don't always go our way. When it doesn't seem to be going God's way.

We know what it's like when it's hard to see where God is, what God is doing or if God even cares. We know what it is like to see injustices in the world, even in our personal life. We might wonder are we backing the right horse? Should we be trusting Jesus with all our heart with all mind, with our very soul?

John is in prison, he is going to lose his head and be killed. We don't know if he knows that but John hears about what Jesus is doing and he sends a message to Jesus wondering, Are you the one who is to come or are we to wait for another. From what is going on in his life and from what he hears about Jesus he's not sure anymore.

The message from our reading in James this week is a message John needs to hear. We need to hear it too. James' message is a simple one. Be patient. Be patient, simple but what does it mean?

One of my favorite movies is Princess bride. In one scene Vizzini keeps saying inconceivable. He says it over and over again. One of the men Inigo Montoya asks why do you keep using that word? I don't think it means what you think it means.

Patience is a word I believe people use and even pray for, but I don't believe they understand what it means. Patience means the ability to suffer long. Is that something you want? The ability to suffer long?

I've often thought I wanted patience. I don't want patience. Well I should restate that. I don't want the necessity for patience. I don't want to suffer. I remember when I took CPE, clinical Pastoral Education. We were talking about death. I said I wasn't afraid to die. Suffering I'm not too crazy about. I don't want to suffer. I don't want to suffer long. I don't know many people who do.

However James reminds us that one of the important ingredients of faith is patience. Hard times test the steadfastness, the patience of faith. It might also test our understanding of faith and correct it.

For John the Baptist this time in prison and the fact that things with Jesus aren't going the way he thought they should doesn't mean he backed the wrong horse. It doesn't mean that Jesus isn't the Messiah. It doesn't mean he was wrong about who the messiah is.

It might mean that he has to rethink what the messiah is. Yes he has come to save us. But what does saving us mean?

For the people of John's time the fact that the Messiah came to save them didn't mean overthrowing Rome, ending world hunger or sickness. What did it mean? What does it mean today?

Have you asked John's question? Have you asked or wondered, ***"Is Jesus the one or should I look for another?"***

I think some people have turned from the faith or rejected the faith seeking to answer that question. What should we say to people who have that question? What would you say? What do we do when Jesus doesn't meet our presuppositions?

When we get to know other people in relationships we often find that there are things about the other people that weren't what you expected. That doesn't mean the relationship is over. In some ways it means the relationship is just beginning, growing and maturing. But it's not always easy. Sometimes it takes patience. The ability to suffer long.

Is Jesus always just what you thought he was? Does he always act or rule the world the way you think he should or think he should? Could your relationship with Jesus be growing, maturing? This is another good thing to think about. It is a good advent question to prepare you for Jesus. Have a great week.