

Faith Seeking Understanding

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[0 : 00] It's my joy and pleasure to bring God's Word to you guys this morning. I see a bunch of new faces. For those who don't know me, my name is Ed. I'm a pastoral resident here at Trinity Cambridge. I'm excited to be able to bring God's Word to you this morning.

We are going to continue on in our sermon series in Matthew as we open up our Bibles. If you are in need of a Bible, feel free to raise your hand and we'll be happy to give you a Bible that you can use and you can keep yourself.

If not, let's open up our Bibles to Matthew 11. The passage this morning will be from verses 1 to 24. Verses 1 to 24. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, we are a weak people, small people, beaten and battered by life, tempted by Satan, and struggling with our own habitual sin.

And we see in our own experiences and in Scripture this morning that it's easy for us to doubt you.

[1 : 26] To doubt your existence, your promises, but I pray you would help me today to preach with clarity, with love, with wholeness, so that our faith would be built up so that we have faith that seeks understanding even in the midst of question and trial and confusion.

So Lord, please meet us, address us by your Word. Won't you increase and that we decrease, Lord, as we look to you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Thank you. If you are able, please rise for the reading of God's Word. Starting off in verse 1.

When Jesus had finished instructing his 12 disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities. Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, Are you the one who is to come or shall we look for another?

And Jesus answered them, Go and tell John what you hear and see. The blind receive their sight, 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.

[3 : 01] And blessed is the one who is not offended by me. 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? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing?

Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in king's houses. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

This is he of whom it is written. Behold, I send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way before you. 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 you. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence and the violence taken by force.

[4 : 09] For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

But to what shall I compare this generation? it is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates. We played the flute for you and you did not dance.

We sang a dirge and you did not dance. For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say, he has a demon. The son of man came eating and drinking and they say, look at him, a glutton and a drunker, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds. Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works have been done because they did not repent.

Woe to you, Chorazin. Woe to you, Bethsaida. For if the mighty works done in you have been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

[5 : 26] But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for whom? And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades.

For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.

This is God's holy and exhortated word. You may be seated. I am struggling to believe in Jesus. I am plagued with doubts on whether God really is with you. I am not sure if I believe the Bible. If your friend honestly shared those concerns with you, how do you think that you would respond? What do you think that you would say? Back in college, I met regularly with a friend who was faithfully attending church, but for years struggled with this kind of doubt.

[6 : 51] Doubt about Jesus, doubt about his faith. I would regularly hear these opening lines from him. There were good weeks, there were bad weeks, but he always seemed to be stuck on the same death.

In the end, we finished school, we moved away with him still being in the same place, still confessing the same doubts.

What about you? Have you ever wrestled with these questions before, these doubts before? Are you struggling with doubts today?

In our passage today, Matthew wants us to overcome our doubts by faith. And the Son of God needs to apply reasons for us to do so, reason after reason.

So the main point of this passage and my sermon is simple. It's because of his ministry and because of his messenger, believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

[8 : 01] But Matthew doesn't just state that truth, he shows us two real contrasting examples, responses to Jesus. On the one hand, you have John the Baptist, on the other you have this wicked generation.

One exemplified humble faith, seeking understanding, the other a heart-hearted skepticism, demanding proof. One said, I believe, help my unbelief, the other said, I don't believe.

Prove me wrong. As a result, there is a stark contrast in the way that Jesus responds to these two people. And that's going to be the main roadmap for the rest of this sermon.

you can follow along on the screen. We'll see first how John doubts Jesus, but in turn, Jesus defends John.

And then we'll learn of what not to do, how not to deal with our doubts, by reading how these wicked cities deny Jesus, and in turn, Jesus denounces them.

[9 : 14] Getting into the text now, in verse one, we read that Matthew signals a transition to the next phase of the narrative as Jesus wraps up his discourse on missions in chapter 10.

And he moves on to carry out his ministry, to teach and preach through the cities. Even when Jesus performed grand miracles like cleansing lepers, or raising people from the dead, it's fascinating that Matthew summarizes Jesus' ministry in this particular way, focusing on his teaching and his preaching.

After all, wouldn't those miracles stand out most in your mind? If someone today taught to preach and performed miracles, we'd like to focus on the miracles, but Matthew, he has a different focus. He highlights the preaching ultimately because these miracles, these healings, they were never the primary focus of Jesus' ministry. They instead were just these big, bright, neon-lit signs to confirm Jesus' message.

It's an affirmation, it's God's affirmation to the preached message of Christ, that he is the foretold Messiah. After all, God would not work such amazing miracles through the mouth of a lion.

[10 : 40] God. And if Jesus came primarily to teach and preach about his identity, we then carry out that legacy, that same focus in our mission, as we fulfill the great commission, teaching in every community, every county, every country, every continent, to obey, teaching everyone to obey what Jesus has commanded us to do.

Now, as Jesus is teaching throughout the cities in verses 2 to 3, he's interrupted by a question, a question from a few of John the Baptist deciders.

If you're new to our Matthew series, or simply new to the Bible, John the Baptist was a prophet sent by God with one singular mission, to prepare the way for the Messiah.

He preached repentance and baptized crowds all to prepare people for the arrival of the Messiah. And even when he was massively popular, and everyone saw him and his baptism, John unwaveringly testified that he is not, he was not the Messiah.

So given all that John had already said and seen, this question from John is quite astonishing. He asks, are you the one who is to come?

[12:05] Or shall we look for another? Huh? What? John is suddenly filled with doubt.

Unlike my college friends, John isn't doubting the reliability of the scriptures, or the existence of God, or even his promise of Messiah, but John is now doubting if Jesus is the true Messiah. Before, John refused, tried to refuse to baptize Jesus, saying that I need to be baptized by you, but now he's questioning, not sure.

Once convictional, but now confused. Once settled, but now shaken. But why did John now doubt Jesus?

First, it seems like John is expecting a completely different ministry from the Messiah. After proclaiming that he is not the Christ, in chapter 3 of Matthew, John continues to say, his wind and fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with fire.

[13:27] It sounds like John, he's expecting Jesus to come with fire, with judgment, with vengeance, to overthrow the evil in the world.

John didn't expect the foretold Messiah to be eating, dining with prostitutes and tax collectors, let alone even choosing one tax collector to be his disciple.

And secondly, there's a small detail that we skipped over that might be part of the reason why John is down. He is in prison. We find out later in Matthew 14 why he's in prison, because he had boldly rebukes.

Hannah, the tetrarch, the Roman leader of the land for his immoral marriage. And you have to understand that prisons back then were much, much, much worse compared to prisons today. Prisons today are five-star marriage compared to prisons back then. Back then, conditions were unsanitary, poorly ventilated, with limited food, little access to daylight, and given Harry's reputation as a tyrannical ruler.

[14:43] He knows that his life is unlawed. His external circumstances are squeezing John and testing his faith.

So I think it makes sense why John would question why Jesus isn't coming thrashing, burning, judging, when he is currently suffering at the hands of the wicked.

Knowing all this, Jesus responds to John in truly a most gracious manner. It's not soaked with passive aggression or disappointment.

It doesn't say, come on, John, I thought you knew better than this. John, John, John, you know better. No, he patiently, gently answers John, saying, the blind receive their sight from a walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.

Now, in the recent passages in Matthew, particularly in chapters 8 and 9, we've seen Jesus do all of these things, haven't we? Jesus has likely performed lots more miracles than the ones that we actually see in these chapters, but we don't read specific examples about them, or specific details rather, because editor Matthew, he's down-selected these few miracles, all so that we as readers would get to this quote in chapter 11, saying, ah, yes, John, or Jesus, has done all of these things.

[16:28] And while this isn't a direct quote from one Old Testament prophet, Jesus does seem to be fulfilling a combination of two messianic prophecies from Isaiah 35 and 61, which I threw up on the screen here, John, who would have intimately known the book of Isaiah, would have understood what Jesus was saying.

By giving concrete evidence of his ministry, of his work, Jesus affirms that the wait is over. He is the foretold Messiah.

John is right that Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead, but that's not now. That's later. For now, look, look clearly at the evidence of who Jesus is.

Because of his ministry, believe, be convinced, have no doubt, that Jesus is the Messiah. God. If you are struggling with doubt today, or if you're trying to minister to a doubting Christian, I think there are four quick lessons that we can read from this passage.

Number one, ask Jesus honestly. Just as John the Baptist wasn't afraid to ask Jesus the honest questions, the raw questions, don't be afraid to admit to yourself and to others and before God, the things that you're thinking and struggling with.

[18 : 05] There is truly great value in working through your doubts, because frankly speaking, if you have never struggled through any kind of doubt throughout your entire Christian life, it may be because you have not truly made faith your own.

Then when tragedy strikes or when a smart skeptic attacks, your faith is shown to be a house of thoughts. But as you work through your doubts, bring them before God.

Bobby Conway, the author of the book *Doubting Towards Faith*, he makes the arguments that doubt is directional. You either doubt for God or you doubt away from Him.

John exemplified the former, doubting toward God, to Jesus, with a faith that sought understanding. So bring your doubts to God, and He will answer them.

Number two, reflect on the evidence. When Jesus answers John, he doesn't say, go searching within your heart to go figure out what you feel is through.

[19 : 20] what you feel is most important. The answer is within you. He doesn't say that. Instead, he gives them a cold, hard fact about what Jesus has done and who He is.

If you are struggling with doubt today, take time to study and reflect on the concrete evidence we have for our faith, the historical evidence of the resurrection of our Messiah, the reliability of our scriptures, solid philosophical reasons to believe in God, even just look to nature.

And as you study my third point is, be willing to correct any misconceptions that you have about the Christian faith. Perhaps you're doubting your faith because ultimately you have a wrong understanding about Christianity.

If you grew up hearing the health and wealth gospel, believing that if you put that point in the offering box that your life will be amazing, pain-free, blessing-filled, and that when tragedy strikes, when life knocks you down and kicks you in the teeth, your faith is shaking.

Just as John the Baptist had to learn and be corrected, be willing, be willing to learn and to correct any misconceptions that you might have about the faith. finally, number four, give proper weight to life circumstances.

[20 : 52] Understand that we are not robots. John the Baptist was not a robot. No one is immune to hardship and Jesus knows our friend, he knows that we are but us.

Understand that more times than not, doubts are not necessarily intellectual in nature or in their origin. When a Christian unjustly fires, or suffers a miscarriage, or loses a spouse, that stuff is hard. It's really, really hard. And it shakes, it can shake your head. But the good news of the gospel is that we are not, ultimately, the same by the clarity or the intensity of our faith, but by the objects of it. Imagine you and a friend, probably John Buckley, hiking out in Mount Washington in the cold winters, where you suddenly run into an angry bear.

In fleeing, you guys get split up. the only option is for you guys to jump into a frozen pond, hoping that the ice will be strong enough for you.

[22 : 20] Your friend John, the Cisco John, John has a strong assurance that his section of the pond is going to hold his weight. He's going to survive. You're in a different spot.

Your mind is filled with doubts, uncertainty, that the ice will hold you up. But you both jump, only to find out that only you can stand.

Sorry to kill you off in the sword. It's not the strength of your faith, but the object of your faith that saves you.

But if you're able to work through your doubts, just as John the Baptist did, Jesus promises another beatitude, just like he did in the Sermon on the Mount, he uses the same word and the same sentence brushes.

He says, blessed is the one who is not offended by you. Now, as gentle and gracious Jesus has been to John, this last statement feels like and it is.

[23 : 29] It's a mild repute to John. And I'm glad that this is here. In our day and age, suspicion, skepticism, our praise, conviction, and assurance of truth are denigrated.

Our secular culture teaches us to question everything, missing the fact that the purpose of questioning is to arrive at truth, not to question indefinitely.

it. Like the gnostic who insists that we can never really know whether God exists or not because he believes endless uncertainty is better than arriving at conviction, arriving at truth.

People claim to see through things, especially religion, and they call that wisdom. love. But here, see us who will speak about this attitude prevalent today.

You cannot go on seeing through things forever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. it is good that the window should be transparent because the street or garden beyond it is opaque.

[24 : 40] How if you saw through the garden too? If you see through everything, then everything is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world.

To see through all things is the same as not to see. Jesus wants us to see, to see with faith who he really is.

He wants us to have the faith that overcomes doubts. So he promises this blessing, this joy to all those who work through their doubts with a faith that seeks understanding and a faith that ultimately accepts Jesus as the Messiah.

This is a kind of funny way to pronounce true blessing, is it not? You might expect Jesus to say, blessed is the one who gives up your life for me or serves me.

And those things are true, but on your first reading, it almost might sound like Jesus is lowering the bar for obedience. All that you have to do is not be offended by Jesus.

[25 : 50] That might seem easy at first, but Jesus knows that in the end, he and his ministry would ultimately be incredibly polarizing and offend the multitudes.

Why? Because Jesus knew that he would not be the kind of Messiah that the public would be expecting. Not the kind of Messiah celebrated by everybody.

Even John the Baptist expected somebody different. The same is true today. Lots of people like Jesus. They do. They like him as a moral teacher or as a good man.

But then, when they actually understand Jesus is the only way to salvation, when Jesus challenges them on their sin, then they're offended.

And although perhaps John was offended by Jesus and did struggle without, he, again, embodied faith that sought understanding, so in turn, ultimately, we'll see how Jesus responds.

[27 : 01] After his disciples leave, notice how Jesus immediately turns to defend John before the cross. He does so with a series of rhetorical questions and figurative metaphors to describe who John is.

But when John's popularity among the Jews, he asks, what did they go out all to see? First, he can contrast John with a reed shaken by the wind, reeds a light and slender plant that thrives in marshy areas where likely are easily and constantly slung about by the wind.

And at that time, the term likely had cultural baggage too, when rabbis would use that phrase to insult the toothpicks, those who would easily flip-flop between opinions just to please the masses and again achieve their own agendas.

But even when John was moved, he was shaken in his doubts. Jesus is so gracious. He sees John not as a reed shaken by the wind, but as a steady, strong, oak tree.

Next, Jesus speaks about soft clothing that can only be found in kings' houses, those who would kiss their way up, you know, flattery and gifts.

[28 : 25] They would do all these things so that they could make it, be comfortable living in the king's house in their smooth satin robes or their comfortable casual flares. But John wasn't like that.

He wore garments of canons and a leather belt, clothing that embodied his practical devotion to God and his separation from the rest of the world.

And at the last question, Jesus gets to the main point. He identifies John as a prophet, but not just any prophet, the final prophet, the one who would predict the arrival of the coming Messiah.

Actually, he was more than a prophet because he didn't just predict Jesus from a distance away. He personally prepared the way for Jesus.

and he introduced Jesus to the world. No other prophet in the Old Testament and the Old Covenant could claim that for us. And that's what makes John the greatest of all those born of women before the coming of the kingdom, which is just another way to say that he is the greatest of all the Old Covenancies.

[29 : 44] He was greater. He's greater than Abraham, greater than Moses, greater than David. Why? It was, again, one thing.

John's historical proximity to Jesus is the one thing that made him the greatest. That he personally introduced the world to Jesus. In other words, simply put, Jesus is what made John great.

God is the greatest. Only with that metric of greatness can we then understand this next verse. Because while John was greater than anyone in the Old Covenant, that's the era of prophecy. That's the era of waiting, anticipation, preparation. But Jesus teaches us in verse 11 that the one who is last in the kingdom of heaven is greater than him. what does that mean? The key to understanding this verse is understanding that John the Baptist, because he lived and died before Jesus' death and resurrection, isn't counted as part of the new covenant people of God.

[30 : 59] Instead, he functions, again, as the last prophet of the Old Covenant, the transitional figure between the two eras, the Old Era of prophecy, the Old Era of anticipation, gives way to the Era of fulfillment, of arriving.

And that's why the least of us who live on this side of the cross is greater than the greatest man on that side of the cross. So if you're here today and you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, you are greater than John the Baptist, you are greater than Abraham, you are greater than Moses and David.

because of the unbelievable privilege that you have as a new covenant saint of God, you have specific knowledge and participation in the new covenant in Jesus' blood.

Matthew 13, 17 says, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and they did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and they did not hear it.

You may read the stories of how Moses personally talked to God face to face, or how Jacob wrestled with God, or how Israelites walked through the Red Sea, and a part of us, when we read stories like that, we feel like, yeah, I wish I could have been there, I wish I could have experienced these things.

[32 : 29] But the truth is, they wish to be like us, because we have the unbelievable spiritual privilege to have the whole testimony of God in the canon of scripture, to have the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit indwelling us now, and most importantly, we get to have a relationship with Jesus, with King Jesus.

All the Old Testament saints longed to hear what we hear, to see what we see. So may we never lose the wonder of the privilege it is to be in relationship with our King Jesus.

Verse 12 is one of the hardest verses in all the book of Matthew to interpret and translate, and to be honest, I'm still not quite sure, but I think that the ESC, along with many other reliable translations, they get it right when it says, from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence and the violent taken by force.

Although the time from John the Baptist until the point of the kingdom, the point that Jesus is speaking, that time is comparatively short.

But even within that short time, the kingdom has suffered great violence. you have exhibit A in John, who is currently brought in the way in a dingy prison cell.

[34 : 05] Take Joseph and Mary, who had to flee Bethlehem to protect baby Jesus from King Herod, who committed infanticide in killing all the baby boys in that region.

And in the end, both John and Jesus, they are martyred coming, but it's not without conflict or challenge.

And that's why Jesus confirms John as the foretold Messiah. And when he does so, he says, if you are willing to accept it, knowing that there will be a cost.

But nonetheless, the violence that comes with being a follower of the crucified Christ, it doesn't change the reality of who John and Jesus are.

It doesn't change the cold-hearted reality of their identities. While John isn't the literal reincarnation of Elijah, Jesus confirms that John is the spiritual Elijah, foretold in Malachi 4-5.

[35 : 15] And that passage was well-known throughout all of Judea and Israel. Rabbis quoted it often, and there was eager anticipation for the Elijah to come. And when Jesus is defending and vindicating John here, explaining who John is, that's also because he's making a bold statement about him himself.

Because if John is the true prophesied Elijah, that means Jesus was the true prophesied Messiah. God, Jesus and John, they come as a package deal.

You can't have one without the other. So if you believe in John, you must believe in Jesus. So now, because of this messenger, he urges us, Matthew urges us, Jesus urges us, believe that he is the Messiah.

Have no doubt in your mind. God. Although Jesus points to his work as clear evidence of who he is, the reality is that only some, only some will have ears to hear this.

And we'll see a prime example of this in the very next verses when he speaks about the wicked generation of Israel who reject him. When he describes them, he draws this analogy from children who are playing in the market place.

[36 : 42] Like they do today, kids like to pretend and play after like adults. They play house or a restaurant. And by then they played wedding or funeral.

So here you have some kids eagerly saying to another group, let's play wedding. We'll play a happy tune on the flutes and you can dance. I'm going to hear a, meh, I'm not interested.

Okay, well, what about funeral then? We'll sing a sad tune, you can play last morning. Meh, not, not interested.

Could be compared to hosting a new guest for dinner. You work for hours and hours preparing a delicious, nutritious meal to present them.

And they take one bite and say, too spicy, can you do this? Shoot, okay, my bad. Let me work on it again.

[37 : 48] Present the dish. After you make it milder, you'll need to hear, too mild. I'm not going to eat this. Wow, okay, let me try to get this gold.

You'll be allowed someone to spice this in. Only then to hear, too salty. Then, too bland, too sweet, too acidic, too hot, too cold.

Jesus is using figurative language to show that there is nothing that this wicked, skeptical generation would accept. They're always moving the gold coast.

They're like the people who make faith conditional. And you likely know that. And you've heard these things. They say things like, no, I'll follow Jesus. And I'll go to church only if I get this job.

I get married. I make more money. My friends go to church. The list of excuses go on and on. Then God gives them these things, but they're again moving the gold post.

[38 : 54] You can follow Jesus' argument clearly here. John, who's eating locusts and honey, he mirrors a sorrowful ascetic diet like that of someone mourning.

And that extreme asceticism and devotion to God, it doesn't barter any attention or respect from the Jews, but harsh rejection, calling him demon-possessed.

That's a really harsh rejection. then what about Jesus then? He came eating and drinking. If they didn't like John's asceticism, then surely they'd like Jesus.

But no, they call Jesus a glutton, a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. This wicked flesh is impossible to please.

And you know, we often think that Jesus is a hard to please, Master. But in reality, as we observe, Jesus was very, very kind to doubting John.

[40 : 03] It's not Jesus who is hard to please, but it's this wicked generation. More than anything, they are proud, full of themselves.

They think that they have a discerning eye to be able to see the spiritual truth about John and Jesus' ministers, when in fact they are the ones that are utterly blind. rest assured there are those in your life that you will evangelize to who will simply not accept the message of the gospel.

And when we're rejected, our first instinct is to question, did I share that right? When our evangelism efforts were shut down, we wondered did we share that at the right time, the right content, right tone?

It's often not because of you. The Spirit hasn't worked on their thoughts, softening them. They will be just like these heart-hearted children. So keep evangelizing boldly, not worried about whether you're getting it perfectly right.

Because even when the responses to our evangelism is mixed, the truth remains clear. wisdom is justified by her deeds.

[41 : 27] We all know the same, actions speak louder than words. And if John is faithfully preparing the life for the Messiah, and Jesus is performing miracle after miracle, helping people, confirming that he is the Messiah, their actions justify themselves in their plans.

God. So because of his ministry, because of his messenger, they should have believed that Jesus is the Messiah. They should have repented of their sins.

But because of their unbelief and refusal to repent, Jesus begins to denounce all their sins.

Specifically, the towns Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, which were the hometowns of some

of the disciples, and a home base for Jesus' ministry for some time.

That means that Jesus performed many, many mighty works in their midst. But like these impossible to please children, they are too obstinate, too blind to see the truth.

In fact, Jesus claims that even Tyre and Sidon, which were the leading cities of Phoenicia, a pagan, idol-worshipping nation, that they would have been quicker.

[42 : 47] They would have been quicker to come to repentance. And these are nations that prophets frequently rebuked and condemned all throughout the Old Testament scriptures. This is such a harsh rebuke.

The Jews were especially proud to call themselves the people of God, right, because they have the oracles of God. They think that they are going to be exalted to heaven.

We read that in verse 23, when in reality they are the ones that would be condemned to hell. For the idolatrous, impious, pagans were more righteous than they.

Even the land of Sodom, the notorious city known for its wickedness, for its sexual immorality, that was judged by fire and brimstone, even Sodom would have gone to the earth.

So because they did not repent, despite noticing miracle after miracle, Jesus pronounces a harsher judgment on these cities.

[43 : 56] It's a sobering reality. The parable of Luke 12 teaches a similar lesson. In that parable, a master sets a servant over his household while he's away.

When he returns, the standard of judgment is in accordance to their level of knowledge. Jesus says, everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required.

And from him to whom he trusted much, they will demand more. Simply put, the more you're given, the more you're responsible for.

I would not be a faithful her of God's word if I didn't properly transmit this point to you, friends. If you've heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, there will be a greater punishment you'd face if you reject the gospel and refuse to repent of your sins.

So if you're here today and you haven't confessed the name of Jesus, make no delay.

[45 : 28] Make today the day of repentance. With the knowledge of the gospel today, you now have the responsibility to respond.

But it's not just responsibility. It's not just obligation. It's not just fear that should motivate you to believe in the gospel.

we ought to be motivated by grace, his kindness. Romans 2, 4 says, it is God's kindness that leads us to repentance.

To see this in our very passage, this kindness of God, goodness, compassion, grace, these are the things that apply to Jesus' ministry.

people. Remember, even John the Baptist didn't expect Jesus to be this merciful. For God sent his one and only son to give sight to the blind, strength to the lame, cleansing to the leper, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead, and to preach good news to the poor.

[46 : 46] He, of course, did that all physically, do. But even more importantly, he has done that spiritually for the least of us in the kingdom of heaven by dying on our behalf and making atonement for our sins.

John and the rest of the Old Testament saints, they didn't understand God's serious plan to save sinners near and far, Jew and Gentile. We, you covenant people of God, know, we know this good news, that despite how good Jesus was, he died a sinner's death, beaten, naked, humiliated.

Why? It was because of his death, his resurrection, that we now have life. And that's good news.

That is the greatest news for all those who have doubted God. It's not just those who have doubted God intellectually who need God's help and mercy.

You might not struggle with the intellectual side of doubt, questioning the existence of God or the reliability of the scriptures. But in one sense, every sin that we commit is because we doubt God and his promises.

[48 : 13] In fact, the very first sin of all humanity that badly commits before they even put their lips onto the forbidden fruit is to doubt God in their hearts.

It's an unclean lack faith that overflowed than ours to sin. So, come, come you all. Repent.

Jesus wants all to come to repentance. And he stands at the ready to save you. Let no shame hinder you for even the sins of Sodom, even the sins of fire and Sodom, Jesus was ready sitting at the edge of the seat to forgive if they had just repented.

That is his humble, gentle posture towards you. 1 John 1, it's a famous verse, if you confess your sins.

There are no qualifiers to that verse. Any sin, if you confess your sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[49 : 27] There is more mercy in Christ than there is sin in us. So repent of your sin, repent of your doubts and go to Jesus.

Go to Jesus, the Messiah who has come to save the world. Go to Jesus as you are, whatever place you are spiritually. Doubts, sin and all, go to Jesus, flee to him.

Don't stop. Don't give up. Keep pursuing and keep seeking him. That you will persevere so that you can believe on the name of Jesus Christ for the salvation of your soul.

And as I wrap up this sermon, I'm happy, I'm happy to share that this friend from college, he exemplified this kind of perseverance. Although he left school within unsure about his faith, struggling through gaps, he never stopped.

He never stopped seeking Jesus. Though in college there were times where he wanted to throw in the towel and I had to talk him off the bridge, metaphorically.

[50 : 43] But he never stopped pursuing a faith that sought understanding. And he is now growing and thriving as a believer, an active member of a church.

And I praise God for this brother, in particular because of God's amazing providence. In the past year he's played such a huge role in a close family member of his journey to faith.

One that I've been praying for for a decade. God has used it in such a powerful, powerful way faith and I'm so thankful to God for him.

Thankful to God and I can't wait to worship for all eternity with him and his close family. So like my friend, like John Baptist, let's pursue a faith, a safe understanding by bringing our doubts to God and repenting for forgiveness of our sins.

Let's pray. Lord, we are humbled and are amazed of your grace and kindness that saves us doubting us sweet sinners.

[52 : 13] that you invite us to come again and again, even when we question you and you give us no reason to question you.

We question you and you answer so gently, so lovingly. So please help us to run to you, to cling to you.

Thank you. you are all that we need. Give us more of you, Lord Jesus.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.