

## Signs and Truth

December 14, 2025 (6)

### Matthew 11:2-11

*<sup>2</sup> Now when John heard in prison about the things the Christ was doing, he sent word by his disciples to Jesus, asking, <sup>3</sup> “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”*

*<sup>4</sup> Jesus responded, “Go, report to John what you hear and see. <sup>5</sup> Those who were blind are able to see. Those who were crippled are walking. People with skin diseases are cleansed.*

*Those who were deaf now hear. Those who were dead are raised up. The poor have good news proclaimed to them. <sup>6</sup> Happy are those who don’t stumble and fall because of me.”*

*<sup>7</sup> When John’s disciples had gone, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John: “What did you go out to the wilderness to see? A stalk blowing in the wind? <sup>8</sup> What did you go out to see? A man dressed up in refined clothes? Look, those who wear refined clothes are in royal palaces. <sup>9</sup> What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup> He is the one of whom it is written: Look, I’m sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you. <sup>11</sup> “I assure you that no one who has ever been born is greater than John the Baptist. Yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*



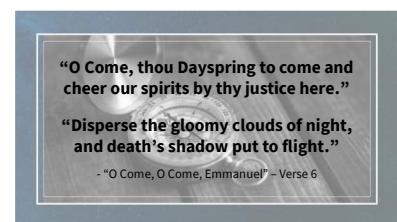
In our passage from Matthew 11 we find John the Baptist in prison. John finds himself there because he called out Herod's sinful act of marrying his brother's wife. For the man following God's call to invite people to repent and to change their hearts and lives, it must have been hard to end up imprisoned. Darkness must have felt close at hand for John. The joy and hope of the Messiah must have felt far away. This couldn't be what the kingdom of God drawing near was supposed to be like. John had to be questioning his faith, his situation, the role that he had been playing on behalf of God, the God-given words he had spoken.

I believe that is why John sends his disciples to ask Jesus, “*Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?*”

Earlier, during the lighting of our Advent candles, we sang verse 6 of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” The author writes these words: “O Come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thy justice here.” It is no stretch of the imagination to think that John would echo these words. Imprisoned for following the call that God had placed on his life, John certainly yearned for God’s justice to manifest itself and to cheer his spirits by setting him free.



The 6<sup>th</sup> verse of the song continues, “Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death’s shadow put to flight.” In his prison cell, with a future clouded with doubt and fear, John likely prayed for God to come and to disperse this figurative cloud that hung over him. The prophet also likely pleaded with God to spare him from the fate that John anxiously believed was coming. If we were in John’s place, we would certainly call on our Emmanuel to come and rescue us.

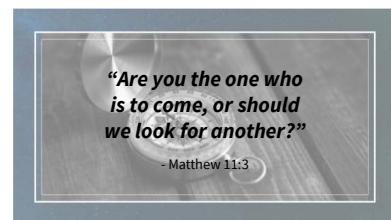


As we prepare to see the signs of God’s truths in today’s message, let us pray...

*Creator God, like John the Baptist, we are looking for the coming of the Messiah. Come to us, speak your Word to us, and shine your light in us, that we may see and trust, and that we may bear your good news to the world, in the name of Christ. It is with this hope that I ask you, O God, to bless the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts. You are our rock and our redeemer, our Christ and our king. Amen.*

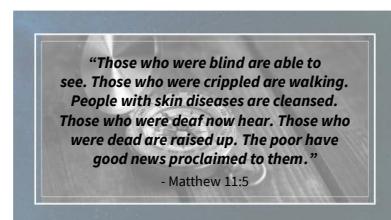
In our day and age, it is easy to find things to get upset about. One does not have to look too hard to find something that seems to be working against you or against your happiness or your safety and security. This is the question we considered during the passing of the peace. At times it feels as if the world were against us. Sometimes when we do get upset, as time passes, we can end up laughing at ourselves, wondering why in the world we were so bothered. But at other times, the thing that upsets or bothers us is serious, maybe even life-threatening. It is in the midst of these trials that we need to be reminded of the words of hope found today's passage from Matthew 11. Turn with me to Matthew 11 as we begin this time together.

In verse 3 we see that John sends his disciples to ask Jesus, “*Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?*” John is in jail, about to lose his head to an impulsive king. We cannot



blame John for his faith growing a little thin in that dungeon. What he was so sure of on the banks of the Jordan River probably felt like a distant memory about now. We too have had our faith fade fast when we have found ourselves in our darkest valleys. Our faith that had felt so sure is suddenly pretty flimsy in the raging storm. We have to give John a little credit here. Rather than simply resigning himself to his fate, John sends out one more ray of hope, trying to pierce to gloomy clouds of night all around him. He asks Jesus, “Are you the one?”

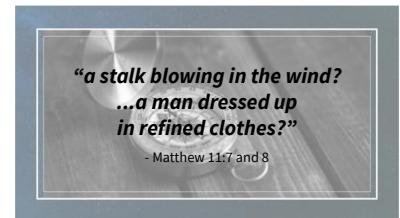
Jesus does not answer John directly. Instead, Jesus offers evidence. This is what Jesus says, as found in verse 5: “*Those who were blind are able to see. Those who were crippled are walking...*



*People with skin diseases are cleansed. Those who were deaf now hear. Those who were dead are raised up. The poor have good news proclaimed to them.”* These things that Jesus offers as evidence, they are the good fruit found when the kingdom of God is made real here on earth. Jesus is inviting John the Baptist and his disciples and us to open our eyes to the truth, to see the signs of the kingdom of God breaking out amongst us and in the world. Through the hands and words of the Messiah, broken hearts, broken promises, and broken lives are healed. Reconciliation is given. Forgiveness is extended. There is light and hope in the darkest of storms. This is why people had gone out into the wilderness to see and hear John the Baptist. He offered forgiveness and reconciliation and healing and new life.



As we press on in our gospel reading, Jesus addresses the appeal of John’s ministry. Jesus asks the crowd what they had gone out to see. Jesus asks if they went out to see “*a stalk blowing in the wind? ... a man dressed up in refined clothes?*” John the Baptist stood strong in the storm, standing to show that the storm is not the final answer. Jesus tells us that we can do that too. We can lift our eyes, our perspective, above the present storm or trial or suffering, seeing the situation from a kingdom of God viewpoint.



We know that John was not a man dressed in refined clothes either. He was just the opposite. His challenge given to the Pharisees and Sadducees was a challenge to those dressed in fine robes sitting in the places of power. John stood up for what was right – living according to God’s will and way, living a righteous and holy life. John was speaking truth to power as he challenged the religious leaders to live lives that bore fruit worthy of the kingdom of God.

Again, Jesus invites us to do the same, standing for what is right, speaking truth to those in power, walking alongside those who need to hear and experience the good news of God's kingdom here on earth.

*"Those who were blind are able to see. Those who were crippled are walking. People with skin diseases are cleansed. Those who were deaf now hear. Those who were dead are raised up. The poor have good news proclaimed to them."*

- Matthew 11:5

Jesus asked John's disciples what they saw. They saw the Messiah at work. They saw the hands and words of the Savior bringing both physical and spiritual healing to the people. They saw the good news revealed in the love, mercy, grace, comfort, assurance, forgiveness, and welcome modeled by the Lord. We, as the followers of Christ today, we are invited to see and to do these things and more. In our time we could add feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, walking beside the single parent and the lonely elder. You could probably add other ways that we could be signs and truth in our world.

This might feel like a tall order. It is a mighty call to follow in the ways of Jesus. Yes, Jesus declares in verse 11 that John was a great man, that no one yet born was greater than John. But Jesus also adds these words to the verse: *"Yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."* Here Jesus is speaking about you and me and all others who seek to love and serve God and neighbor with a humble servant's heart. This too is modeling the Christ.

When we follow Jesus' example, helping the blind to see, the lame to walk, the diseased to be cleansed, the deaf to hear, the dead to be raised, and the poor to hear good news, then we are bearing signs of the kingdom of God in our time and place.

When we do these things, we are assuming our role as the one written of in verse 10: “*Look, I’m sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you.*” May it be so for you and for me, fellow messengers of God. Alleluia and amen.

### **GPS – Grow, Pray, Study**

- 1) *Grow.* When have you seen or experienced healing or restoration or God at work in some other way in your life or our world? How has this led to faith growth?
- 2) *Pray.* What kinds of “prisons” tend to bring out doubts... for you or for others regarding Jesus and their faith? Who is in this place that you can pray for this week?
- 3) *Study.* Read Matthew 11:12-19. Who do you know today who are like those Jesus speaks of in verses 16 and 17? How can you play a role in them coming to know Jesus?