



The Gospel According to Luke

Wk. 33 "When in Doubt . . ."

By Pastor Jody May

Luke 7:18-30 ESV

Messengers from John the Baptist

¹⁸ The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, ¹⁹ calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ²⁰ And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" ²¹ In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. ²² And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. ²³ And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

²⁴ When John's messengers had gone, 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? ²⁵ What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. ²⁶ What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ²⁷ This is he of whom it is written,

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

²⁸ I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." ²⁹ (When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, ³⁰ but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)

1. You're not alone, even the strongest in faith deal with doubt.

¹⁸ The disciples of John reported all these things to him.

We last left JB in chp. 3 where he was performing that which he was born to do. His ministry took on two facets; 1st He was a traveling preacher with a message for the Jewish people to repent of their sins and prepare for their Messiah. The 2nd part of his ministry is that he was to be an actual time marker, his birth being foretold like Jesus', that his presence in the world meant the Messiah was right behind him.



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Isaiah 40:3-5 ESV

³ A voice cries:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵ And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

- JB is no small fry, no one else gets to say that in ancient prophecy **"I was talked about"**, JB alone gets that privilege.
- He was in the same family as Jesus, a cousin, his father was one of the High priests at the temple, and it is noted in Lk. 1, that His mom and dad were known to be righteous people (chp. 1), that meant that they had faith in God making them a part of a very special and important remnant, that still believed God would save His people by His hand not by their works. Like Abraham, it was counted to them as righteousness.
- Zechariah, his pa, was visited by the archangel Micahel, to tell him that his son would be the one fulfilling the hearald of the Messiah.
- Along with that, His birth was a miraculous one, for his mother was barren and could not have children but God opened her womb and in that while he was still in there, when Mary visited he leaped in his mom's belly, because he had already been touched by the Spirit of God to accomplish his task in recognizing the Messiah.
- When John was born he was placed under a 'Nazir' / Nazarite vow from birth which included no drinking of anything from the vine, no cutting or pulling of the hair, and no touching of the dead.
- These vows when kept by individuals for a lifetime may enter the holy of holies, no one gets to do that but the high priest!
- John walked away from society and all it's comforts and delicacies, lived in the wilderness, ate very organic food, and never married. No body but nobody has these things going or them, and that's what Jesus thought as well.



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Jesus makes a statement about JB that I got to tell ya I am a little Jealous about and you should be too. Jesus has nothing but praise for his boy. He's like "well let me tell you something - if you were wanting to see something special and extraordinary out in the wilderness you got it! This guy is smart but you won't find his nose stuck in a book or in a computer screen, he doesn't have time to study history, he's making it! There's no reed in the wind here, he's not someone blown about by the winds of destiny, he makes things happen! And he doesn't need the best threads to make him feel important or pretty. His choice in clothes tells you an I fashion is a concern for people in the world not people found in the Bible. (Jesus) You all went out to see a man's man, a wild, God-ordained, wilderness grown, eating off the land, living off the grid, don't need no body, never offered anyone a thing, but still had disciples following him. **This guy wasn't just a prophet he is THE PROPHET!** Look all the guys we have idolized as Jews: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Jeremiah, Elijah, and Elisha, none of them are what JB is. That's Jesus' way of saying no one under the Old Covenant is JB's equal in holiness! He's the Church Norris of the OT. He doesn't prophesy about the future he is the future!

And in all of that here's what I want us all to get down this morning, grasp onto, and have a come to Jesus moment right now. At JB's best, from what his lineage had set him up to do, from all his training, and even his sovereign calling **he still doubted his calling, he still doubted if he had been right about Jesus, and he was at odds with how his life had turned out.**

If JB had a time of doubt in his life do you and I really think we are going to do any better?! And yet it is one of the things I hate dealing with, there is nothing like the stress of living with doubt in your life about God and where you fit in His Kingdom! Have you ever had that low time in your life where you did everything you were suppose to do and still your life didn't work out right? That was JB's predicament right now.



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And John, ¹⁹ calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ²⁰ And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'"

John, who has already baptised Jesus, John who had already told the pharisees he's unworthy to tie Jesus' sandals, John who has looked across the Jordan and claimed, "there goes the Lamb of God" (Jn 1:29). Now after all of this, John we know has been arrested, and he is held in Herod's summer home, Ft. Machairus, North East of the Dead Sea. He's been in prison for several months now, he who hasn't slept inside four walls for who know how long, and can most likely just peek outside. So whatever it is that he's in turmoil about, we'll get to that in our next point, he sends his disciples to ask one question. – "Are you the one to come or shall we look for another?" "One to Come" was a mesianic title out of Psalm 40 & 118 and it is how JB likes to refer to the Messiah, the "one that is foretold". JB, after all his witnessing, and declaring that Jesus is more than him, now asks for clarification on whether he got this right.

Have you ever been in that position, make a life altering position, and wonder "Did I just do the right thing?"

- You bought a new house and have what seems an exorbatant amount of debt, and no matter how much you make it always seems like that monthly payment is killing you – did I jreally need all of this?
- You married someone and after the newlywed period wears off, you have your first real argument, – what did I just get into?
- You went to school and put all of it on student loans, and the grace period is over and you have been paying the gov back for a few years and you haven't even made a dent yet – is that something I should have done?

To doubt is human but to doubt and believe that God has deserted you in your life is tragic, sinful, and can lead you into a mess of trouble.

James 1:6 ESV – "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind."



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Doubt left unchecked can throw you against the rocks, because it is a doubt that leads to inaction. But doubt can also be a helpful tool because it can work as that gut feeling that makes you check the depth of the waters before going further. But we will talk more on that in a second. But just so you know that you are not alone here are some other doubters you may not of known about:

Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light: "Darkness is such that I really do not see—neither with my mind nor with my reason—the place of God in my soul is blank—There is no God in me—when the pain of longing is so great—I just long & long for God ... The torture and pain I can't explain." – Mother Teresa of Calcuta

C.S.Lewis once said, "I have found that nothing is more dangerous to one's own faith than the work of an apologist." Lewis battled doubt because in his line of work he had to wrestle with the arguments against faith all the time. "That is why Faith is such a necessary virtue: unless you teach your moods 'where they get off,' you can never be either a sound Christian or even a sound atheist."

"For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell. I trembled in all my members. Christ was wholly lost. I was shaken by desperation and blasphemy of God." – Martin Luther

"I think, when a man says, 'I never doubt,' it is quite time for us to doubt him, it is quite time for us to begin to say, 'Ah, poor soul, I am afraid you are not on the road at all, for if you were, you would see so many things in yourself, and so much glory in Christ more than you deserve, that you would be so much ashamed of yourself, as even to say, 'It is too good to be true.'" – Charles Spurgeon

Everyone doubts their life choices and the presence of God in their lives from time to time, just heed the warning today family, not to hide it, not to fall into depression over it, and never give into it. Now to help us today let's discuss briefly where we may see doubt spring up in our life like our soring time weeds.

2. Where does our doubt come from?

I really just want to identify for us today a few things present here in JB's story, between the lines and show us how we all can get caught in the plague of doubt and all the emotional turmoil that brings us.



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1st thing I think we see here is the personal tragedy that JB is experiencing. After spending over thirty years preparing for his time to shine for God, he is only allowed 18 months of active ministry. JB is holy, set apart, foretold in the Bible, and in the end after living in the wilds outside of Jerusalem, preaching with a boldness and fervidness that know no bounds he is put in jail. I think what JB is experiencing is that after a life of piety he starts wondering, is this what I get? I wasn't even wanting to gain earthly rewards, just the knowledge I burned bright for God would have been enough, but even that was taken away. It was a life that seems cut short to us, but to God JB did exactly what he was supposed to do.

Maybe you have experienced the same thing like JB this morning. You have gone through the mill, you have gotten chewed up, and **the only thing you ever did to deserve it was be obedient.** My family the temptation is only to look at our story with our own eyes in the present, but God sees our story as whole **in one moment.** Trust in how God is seeing and working your story, with the good, the bad, and the ugly, to bring Him the most glory, even if you are not seeing it now. You aren't alone in that feeling, there is a building full of people here like that.

2nd thing that is here is the Popular Influences and Expectations of the Messiah that JB shared with all Jews. The expectations and popular view of the Messiah for the Jews is that this person would come, free them immediately with a military might, **putting the Jews back in the right position in the world, on top again.** JB is no different on this which is why he checked with Jesus to see if He was the Messiah and not another prophet like himself. JB wanted to know to know if he was wrong so he could start kicking himself now, or if he was right to start experiencing joy now.

Perhaps in your life you came to Christ with the wrong expectations in your head because you were influenced by the beliefs of Jesus from the people around you. You thought that by living a morally right life you would have a better life now, you thought by not indulging in the worldly luxuries of addictions you would be spared hardship, but in reality, you discovered that Christianity has left you deflated. **The danger comes from the creation of expectations in your life creating beliefs in your heart that says if I live a certain way I expect God to do this for me.**

Expectations, especially based on false doctrines will let you down fast and hard, but desiring God's Grace is good because a desire unfulfilled by god still achieves much by making us wait patiently on the Lord bringing about the good fruit that is endurance, character, and hope which will not fail you.



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3rd, very simply here JB didn't have the full revelation of God yet. JB, we can't forget wasn't living in the NT times, he was the last of the prophets of the Old Covenant. He was the last of the older generation whose eyes would not see the glory of the Lord. In short, he wasn't aware of the full plan of Salvation yet, how it would work. He had forgotten Isaiah 53 about the suffering servant.

For us we don't get the luxury of this excuse but **we do need to realize that many times we live in doubt just because we don't read the Bible as much as we need to**, because it is in the reading of God's revelation that the Spirit of God opens our eyes to see. When we read the Bible now, we can see the whole story from Genesis to Revelation, we see the Glory of the Son, how He saves us, and we see our sin and the need to repent. This is what drives us to prayer, to confession, to Christian community, to service, and to loving others. The reason why we doubt our Salvation, the reason we doubt if we are really living in God's plan for our lives, is just because we refuse to read the Bible that is the complete revelation of Himself to us.

Now with those 3 things in mind, of where does our doubt come from, let's go back to the text and see how the Gospel answers this for us.

3. Looking at Doubt through a Gospel lens.

Now JB maybe was in the dumps, maybe he was struggling with what all the other Jews were struggling with, wanting a Messiah that would free him from a world that loved not God, by physical means if need be. But JB did do something right, and it shows he didn't lack total faith in Jesus, and it is something that we all need to emulate.

¹⁹ "...calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord,"

JB didn't waste a lot of time in the dumps, railing against God, blaming others for his moods, **where did he go for answers? Straight to Jesus**, and notice as well, **Luke is now using the title of Lord** for Jesus signifying King and God. Luke is telling us when you have doubt go to the only one that can answer your doubts, Jesus. Family, you will never find answers for your doubts inside of you, **doubts I think are actually God allowed trials that take us to His Son for the strengthening of faith.**

Please witness now as Jesus answers JB and He answers us on how to deal with doubts.



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" ²¹In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. ²²And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.

Jesus knows that JB is dealing with the same false assumptions that everyone is dealing with so very specifically he has JB's disciples watch Him for a very intense hour: He displays for them all the healings we have seen Him do over months, and I don't know He may have even brought the dead back, I know they would have heard the stories of Him resurrecting the young man, but it is possible He did it specifically for them. Then He sends them back to JB and tells them just to tell him what you have seen. Jesus knows that JB knows the book of Isaiah because JB saw himself in Isaiah's writings. In Isaiah 29:18, 35:5-6, & 61 the Messiah heals and preaches good news before He ever judges.

Then Jesus gives this great statement, I love it, because it is the Gospel!

²³And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

The Gospel, the message of the Messiah, is not about making you feel secure based on what you have done in your life, but it is the power that saves because it secures you by showing you what Jesus has done in His life!

Happy, content, fulfilled is the person that believes in the work of Jesus and is not offended by how He does it different than the way you want it! If you find yourself doubting thinking you got this Christianity thing wrong could it be that your offended that God didn't ask your opinion on how to do it first? Are you offended by a God that didn't give you what you wanted based on how you think he should have rewarded, disciplined, or even parented you? **In Contrast here**, Parents, do you think your children have a right to be offended by you because you know what's better for them than they do? **Then how can we have any right to be offended by Jesus who is divine?**

I pray that JB heeded Jesus' words that day because soon after that he faced his death. On his way to the chopping block he either was putting His faith in God hoping that his life wasn't a cruel joke, or he put His hope in Jesus, in the works He was doing, knowing that the Messiah would bring Him a resurrected life.



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My family, are you putting your hope in the completed works of Jesus, that He demonstrated to us in His life and death on the cross? Are you a little saddened right now because your putting too much stock in your ability to perform your Christian duties hoping that God rewards you for good behavior? **Your reward is the treasure of Christ, that He loved you, and just as He did for JB in our story today he is saying to us all right now, look at me and be not offended and find your release from your doubts again today.** Put your hope in Him family He's the only sure thing there is in this world.

PRAYER

COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

Go in the name of the Father that for our doubts gave us the gift of faith because we can't produce faith by our own ability to free us.

Go in the name of the Son that displayed His works so that we may be sure of the power of God to save us.

Go in the name and power of the HS that brings us to conviction when we feel offended by how Jesus has chosen to love us.