

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (May 15, 2022)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

What do we do when we have doubts about our faith? Do we feel safe enough to engage those doubts, wrestle with them, and then admit to other Christians that we are struggling and unsure? I'm not sure we feel church is a safe place to admit our doubts. Maybe some will think we've "lost our faith." Maybe they'll think it's contagious. For some faith may be one long continuous straight upward line ... My faith isn't so straight and it's not continuously upward. It actually looks a lot like the ups and downs of the Stock Market. Honest doubts are normal and natural for most of us. And honesty about honest doubts should be a valued part of the fabric of life at Grace of Christ. When we admit that, live that, and support each other in the midst of our doubts, we find ourselves in good company, God's company too. Many of the heroes of faith in the Bible struggled with doubts. The Psalms are brutally honest about doubt (read Psalm 73). The disciple Thomas had his doubts ... actually all the disciples did. And our person of focus this morning, the great John the Baptist, had doubts too. Good news! God is patient with doubters, He loves doubters, He welcomes doubters. May we here at Grace do the same!

John the Baptist: Confused, Troubled, Doubting (Luke 7:18-35)

¹⁸The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, ¹⁹calling 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?' ²⁰And 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?"'" ²¹In that hour He (Jesus) 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. ²³And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.'

²⁴When 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? ²⁵What 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. ²⁶What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ²⁷This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you."

²⁸I 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, ³⁰but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)

³¹'To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? ³²They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep."

³³For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, "He has a demon." ³⁴The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, "Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" ³⁵Yet wisdom is justified by all her children."

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. Read Luke 7:1-17. What things (Luke 7:18) did John's disciples report to him about Jesus?
2. How did Jesus respond to John's question, "are you the one"?
3. What does Jesus say in this passage about John the Baptist?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

4. Why, at this point, was John questioning who Jesus was? Where was John (read Luke 3:18-20)?
5. Why did Jesus respond to John by performing miracles?
6. What does it mean, "the tax collectors too declared God just"?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

7. How would you feel if you were John, languishing in jail, Jesus had not freed you, and His message was different than yours?
8. Have there been times when Jesus has not done or said what you would have done or said? Give one example.
9. Have you ever had doubts about, or are now doubting, your faith? Discuss. Who can you share your doubts with?

As you spend time praying remember that prayer is meant to be the most natural, easy, and empowering, part of your day. Prayer is talking to God and hearing Him talk to you, knowing that He hears you, and cherishes you. In your prayers ask God to help you admit your doubts to Him, trusting that He is patient with you because He loves you and He is Truth. Ask God to help you accept others who are doubting, and to walk with them and to pray with them.

God will help you because He loves you.