

Assurance for the Days Ahead Matthew 11:1-15

Don't you just love the questions children ask us, as crazy as they may be sometimes? I believe we enjoy them so much because of the pure honesty with which they are asked. When you hear these questions asked you know they are coming from the bottom of their heart. My question since we are talking about questions is, "When did the questions stop? When did we depart from the days of pure and honest questioning?" We have genuine questions we desire answers to but we don't ask them. And why? Is it because it was funny when we were children but now we just seem ignorant? Maybe it's because we should know better?

This morning, I am here to tell you not to stop asking questions. Never stop asking questions of a pure and sincere heart because to God, we will always be his children. John the Baptist himself preached that to "all who [receive Jesus], to those who believe in his name, he gives the right to become children of God—children not born of blood nor the will of the flesh, nor will of man, but born of God" (John 1:11-12, BSB). As God's children, the writer of Hebrews reminds us to "draw near to God with a sincere heart" (Hebrews 10:22a, NIV). Never shy away from asking questions of God. And I will tell you why. As we have read this morning, we find a familiar character in Jesus' life, his cousin John the Baptist. The Gospel writers esteem him high because of his calling and ministry. He was considered a great prophet in the same regard as that of Elijah, who was probably the most highly regarded and respected of all the Jewish prophets. But John stands out among the rest of those who spoke on behalf of God because the others only talked about the coming Messiah and John introduced him to the world.

For years John proclaimed that Jesus was the hope and help the world was looking for and needed from God, and as we saw from our last series, when we go forth into the world for the sake of Christ, the Devil can't stand it and there is push back. For the message of Christ and the need of repentance, John flowed in and out of prison when he would tick off or offend the wrong person. Finally, however, he was in prison and it had apparently seemed as if he would not leave this time. When given time to reflect upon things as he looked at the four walls that surrounded him, he wanted to know if his life was worth it or was it all for not. So, he sent word to Jesus, the one who could tell him for sure. It seems

like a silly thing for such a great and godly man to do. With all that he knew and what he had experienced, even before he was born, he had the calling of God upon his life, but yet in the midst of it all, doubt crept in. But he just had to ask. Now, Jesus could have responded hatefully like we tend to do sometimes when we think someone should know better. And you know what I mean... But, he didn't respond that way. Why? Because he knew John was in genuine distress and needed encouragement because of the difficult situation he found himself in.

Child of God, remember this: "The first step back from doubt to faith is to bring one's plight (troubles, cares) to the Lord Jesus himself. It is no sin to ask a question if our heart attitude is right" (V. Raymond Edman). When we approach Jesus in such a manner of genuine faith as John did, something powerful will take place. Not only will Jesus remind us of who he is and what he has done, but he will remind us of whose we are and what we have done in him. He reminds us that he has created us for a purpose and that he is molding us every day of our life. I love this passage:

"This is the message that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 'Jeremiah, go down to the potter's house. I will give you my message there.' So I went down to the potter's house and saw him working with clay at the wheel. He was making a pot from clay. But there was something wrong with the pot. So the potter used that clay to make another pot. With his hands he shaped the pot the way he wanted it to be" (Jeremiah 18:1-4, ERV).

God cares about us all. When the pot did not turn out right, he could have cast it to the side, but he didn't. He didn't throw the clay away... and he still doesn't. God is molding us all by his hand. He told his people "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV).

When you are in trouble, call out God. When you are in distress, let him hear from you. If you are in doubt, not matter the reason, seek Jesus out for your need. Despite what things may look like now, when we come to Jesus, we can find assurance for the days ahead.