



-- Introduction – Video Clip – Case for Christ

Is your faith ready to withstand the great questions and the many slings and arrows of this life? Just for the record, there truly are real and satisfying answers to those difficult questions posed in the video clip, so if you, like Charles Templeton, are vexed by those questions, I will be more than happy to talk through them with you. However, to do so today is not our purpose. Rather, I have introduced this morning's sermon with this clip because, in it, Lee Strobel alludes to a question that we are blessed to consider today, and that is this: What do we do when we encounter doubts? Whether they come in the form of doubts about our circumstances or doubts about our faith, how can we address them and move forward for the glory of God in our lives?

This morning's text gives us powerful insight and direction regarding these questions, and The Big Idea presented in today's Scripture passage is this: To derail doubt, carefully consider the mentality, the miracles, and the message of Christ.

-- Read Luke 7:18-28

-- Pray

Please look with me in verses 18-19, where we become witnesses of an important event in the life of John the Baptist: *“John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, ‘Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?’”* In verse 18, we learn that John's disciples had seen the mighty miracles Jesus had been performing. They

had observed His righteous rule and His radical redemption, and they had witnessed the matchless power of His incomparable compassion in action. And in response to what John's disciples had seen and heard, they hurried off to the prison where John the Baptist was incarcerated and reported to him all they had seen.

And the response we hear from John is certainly not what we would expect at first glance. In fact, it very likely strikes us as extremely surprising, especially when we consider John's own testimonies about the identity of Jesus Christ that are now recorded forever in the Gospels. Take for example John 1:29-34:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

Such words from the mouth of John the Baptist make John's actions here appear all the more startling. In verse 19, we see him sending emissaries to ask Jesus if He really was the Messiah or if they should expect someone else. Even though God had given John the Baptist such convincing revelation about the identity of our Lord, and even though he had himself on many occasions testified that Jesus was the very Son of God, at the particular moment in time about which we read this morning, John's thoughts about Jesus nonetheless wavered.

For this reason, this apparent doubt in the mind of John has perplexed many faithful Bible readers, and in response to this surprising revelation of Scripture, various explanations have been advanced. For example, some suggest that John sent these emissaries, not for his own sake, but rather for theirs. According to this suggestion, John himself didn't have any doubts, but he noticed uncertainty in the minds of his disciples, and, therefore, he sent them off to discover conclusive proof from Christ Himself. Another school of thought suggests that John sent these two men because he thought it was time Jesus moved towards decisive action and wanted to urge Him to press forward with haste. These explanations might be possible. That is, the text itself does not completely preclude them. However, at the same time, they sound a lot like vain attempts to explain away the obvious, don't they?

In this instance, as is very often the case, it seems that the simplest explanation is the best—John was experiencing a moment of real doubt. Let us consider for a moment what was happening to John at this time. Although John had announced the coming of Christ, and although Jesus was out and about healing sicknesses and even raising the dead, we know from the parallel account in Matthew 11 that John had been languishing in prison for many months. The great forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist, who had lived his life freely roaming the wide-open spaces of the desert, was now confined to a tiny, dank cell. Barclay writes, “Shut in his cell, choked by the narrow walls, John asked his question because his cruel captivity had put tremors in his heart.”

Not only did imprisonment inspire this occasion of doubt, but John’s expectations contributed to it as well. As profoundly great a prophet as John was, even still Jesus didn’t fit some of his expectations as to what the Messiah would do. The same could be said of Jesus’ own disciples. In fact, all of Israel had difficulty adjusting their preconceived picture of what the Messiah would be like to what they were seeing in Jesus’ ministry. They expected a conquering military hero, not a Lord of love and a Gospel of grace. Thus, we see in John a moment of real doubt expressed in the question of verse 19.

The first principle that we ought to learn from this is that we, too, are prone to encounter doubts in our lives. If it could happen to John the Baptist, what makes us think that we will remain immune? You and I are fallen people with fallen minds living in a fallen world, and with that fallen condition will sometimes come a fragmented faith. And that is o.k. The question is not whether or not doubts will come; they most assuredly will. The pertinent question to be addressed is the very question that is answered in our verses today: How do we derail doubt when it comes our way? Whether it surfaces in our own spirits or is expressed to us by someone in need of godly counsel, we can look to our text today for God’s remedy.

And what we learn from our text is that to derail doubt we must first...

1.) Maintain Christ’s mentality.

Look with me at verse 21 and notice what Luke tells us what has been happening just before these two emissaries of John ask Him their question in verse 20. He writes, “*At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind.*” So there Jesus was, performing a multitude of magnificent miracles in the very presence of these two

inquirers, and yet they still have the temerity to ask, “*Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?*”

I wonder how you and I would have reacted if we had been in Jesus’ shoes. Some of us, I think, would probably be offended. Don’t you think we would have been tempted to say something like, “Hello, people?! What have you just been looking at? Have you got camel’s hair in your eyes, or what? Do you not see all of these miracles? And I know you know about that boy I raised from the dead in Nain, right? You two fellas are a little slow on the uptake, aren’t ya?” Others of us would surely become discouraged, thinking to ourselves, “This is awful. I mean, if my own cousin and forerunner is wavering, then who on earth will ever believe? You know what? I’m tired of all this healing and preaching, and I just don’t think it is all worth it any more.”

But Jesus didn’t respond that way at all, did He? And we learn from our verses that in order to maintain Christ’s mentality in the face of doubt we must first stay calm. With that in mind, we are blessed to notice that Jesus doesn’t appear to be offended or discouraged at all by John’s question. His ire is not elevated, nor does He become condescending toward them. He doesn’t offhandedly brush their question aside or overreact with despondency and the urge to give up on John. On the contrary, Jesus welcomes John’s disciples and receives their question in stride. You see, Jesus knew the truth, and because of that He had no cause to be distressed about their question. Rather, He responded to it with composure, confidence, and even joy. And we can take great confidence in the fact that He responds to our doubts in the same way today. As Max Lucado has written, “God has never turned away the questions of a sincere searcher.”

Second, we must seek the right source. Notice the first thing Jesus does in reply to John’s doubt—He quotes Scripture. In verse 22 He says, “*Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.*” In this statement, Jesus was reminding John that the miracles He was performing were the very actions that were predicted of the Messiah throughout the book of Isaiah, and in particular Isaiah 61:1, which contains the following prophetic words: “*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.*” // Jesus derailed John’s doubt by directing him to definitive truths from God’s Word.

Therefore, whenever others express doubts to us or whenever we ourselves experience them, let us maintain the mentality of Christ and meet them with Scripture. For if we believe and confess that God's Word is true, then we have every reason to remain calm in the face of doubt, because people who have the truth need not fear any inquiry. This doesn't mean that we will always be able to come with every answer right away, but it does mean that we know where to find infallible truth. Consequently, if we would allow God to derail doubt in our lives, then we must meet it with the calmness of Christ and reply to it with the truth of God's Word.

As a note, this is precisely what we see John doing in these verses, isn't it. Even in the face of his apparent doubt, we see him maintaining the mentality of Christ. Notice that John does not overreact to his uncertainty and say something like: "If Jesus were really the Messiah, there is no way on earth that I, his forerunner, would be languishing here in prison while He is out living it up?" No, John doesn't appear to be offended or discouraged at all. Rather, he is the picture of one who not only stays calm, but he also seeks the right source by sending his disciples to inquire of Jesus Himself.

The second point from our text this morning is that in order to derail doubt we must...

2.) Marvel at Christ's Miracles

You see, this text teaches us more about derailing doubt than remaining calm and seeking the right source alone. It also teaches us what to focus upon as we search the Scriptures. In short, it instructs us that doubts are derailed when we marvel at Christ's miracles.

I remember that a few months ago I was pulled away from working on the computer by the girls who desperately wanted me to come and to watch the lunar eclipse with them and Stephanie. Because they were so cute and so persistent, I decided to give in and go with them to watch the excruciatingly slow process unfold, even though I was really thinking, "Oh, how am I ever going to get everything done?!" However, as I think about our family standing there together and watching the moon slowly transform from white to red to completely blacked-out, I am struck by the awesome power of our awesome God. In those blessed moments, God allowed me to step outside my doubts and concerns and step into a place of wonder where His matchless power was on magnificent display. And it dawns on me that God has filled not only our world but, moreover, His Holy Word

with such evidence of the miraculous in order to fill our hearts with confidence and peace in Him.

It is moments like those that we discover how gloriously God is able to filter our anxieties and uncertainties through a prism of faith. In our awareness of His miraculous power, our doubts, as great as they might be, encounter a Force much greater who is ready and willing to provide *“immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.”*

In our passage for this morning, we see this very pattern revealed. Look with me in verse 22, and notice that when John’s question is posed to Jesus, not only does Jesus quote the prophecies about Himself from the Book of Isaiah, but each of those revelations points to His own miraculous power. He exclaims, *“Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”* In other words, Jesus is telling us that one of the most important keys to derailing doubt is to slow down, stay calm, and give serious thought to His miracles. He emphasizes this idea again in [John 14:11](#) when He says, *“Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.”*

To conclude this morning, will you please turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 77, and listen to the gloriously powerful manner in which this priceless truth is illustrated in this Psalm of Asaph:

I remembered my songs in the night. My heart mused and my spirit inquired: “Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?”
Selah. *Then I thought, “To this I will appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High.” I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds. Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God? You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.*

In the midst of serious doubts, Asaph began to marvel at the miraculous power of God, and as He did, his entire attitude began to change. As he marveled at the

great and mighty deeds that God had performed throughout the ages, his hurts gave way to hope, and his worry gave way to worship.

Finally, the last lesson I want to demonstrate from this text this morning is this: In order to derail doubt, we must...

3.) Meditate upon Christ's Message

I will not spend much time making this point this morning. However, we can begin to see the centrality of this truth to derailing doubt when we realize that the miracles mentioned in verse 22 are mentioned in ascending order of importance. That is, the miracles Christ mentions there become more impressive as He progresses through the list with the last miracle mentioned being the most significant of all.

With that in mind, turn back in your Bibles to Luke 7:22 and read it with me. Luke writes, *"So [Jesus] replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor."*

It may, at first glance seem strange or even incorrect that, in this ascending order of importance, Jesus lists the fact that good news is preached to the poor last, even after He has just mentioned that He has even raised the dead. However, when we meditate upon Christ's message here, it is not strange at all, for, indeed, this is the most significant miracle of all. It takes us beyond the moment in time at which people in a faraway place in a long forgotten time were, on a given day at a given hour healed or even raised from the dead and reveals to us that these miracles are even more abundantly available today for all who will believe.

Now, by this I do not necessarily mean that belief in Christ will heal our every physical ailment on this earth at this time. However, as is always the case, beyond the physical description in Scripture lies much more profound spiritual realities. And the fundamental essence of this spiritual truth for us this morning is this: We ourselves can be raised from the dead forever in Christ, because He has come to preach Good News even to sinners like us. That is, even in the midst of our doubts, Good News has come for you in the Person of Christ. His love is ever waiting to shatter our unbelief and replace it with life eternal. For of all the miraculous messages in all of Scripture, none is so great as the gift of Jesus Christ born of a virgin, sacrificed on the cross, and risen from the dead.

-- Conclusion

Do doubts flood your heart this morning? // When was the last time you slowed down, sought the right source, and marveled at the greatest and most miraculous message in the history of the world? // If we would wholeheartedly seek God in these ways, we will surely discover how God can change our doubts to glorious delight in Him.