

Title: SIGNS WE HAVE, SIGNS WE NEED, MATTHEW 11:2 – 19
(Chatham, NJ; 01/05/14, AM) [Pc – The Chase]

Theme: Jesus answers John's doubts, and we have even more answers to maintain belief.

Purpose: To demonstrate what assurances we have today, and to be confident that, even with a few doubts, our faith is valid.

Introduction:

1. Jesus didn't begin his ministry until John, the Baptist was imprisoned, Mt. 4:12.
2. Most likely they only met at Jesus' baptism but had little contact after that.
3. From prison, John probably hears a lot of conflicting information about Jesus.

I. The View from a Prison Cell, Luke 3:19-20

A. Remembering John

1. The voice in the wilderness
2. The man who introduced the world to Jesus
3. A prophet greater than all others
4. Even Herod admitted this, Luke 6:19-20
5. Yet from his prison cell, John sends disciples for assurance, Mt. 11:2-4
6. What does the world look like from here? It looks like what little you can see and what little you hear from others.

B. Do we dare to admit doubts?

1. John entertains thoughts of uncertainty; dare we say doubts
2. Did he know that his life was going to end soon?
3. Did he want to verify that his work had been fulfilled?
4. We can only surmise the reasons for the question
5. Do not confuse his doubts with faithlessness
6. Faithlessness is characterized by a life of disobedience and a rejection of God
7. Godly people have always experienced moments of trial that harbored doubts

II. Signs We Want/Signs We Get (this is "The Chase" part of the outline)

A. Jesus asks 3xs, "What did you go out to see?" (Are some of these the signs we want?)

1. First, a reed shaken by the wind – someone who vacillates and changes with the winds of societal trends or someone who goes along with the crowd and the opinion leaders
2. John was none of this
3. Second, someone in soft clothing – a fashion show? Someone who represents the good life? The life of the rich and famous? The life of kings and powerful people?
4. They got someone who lived the wilderness life. . . akin to the life that Israel led for 40 years in the desert; his was a life of asceticism and self-denial
5. God points the way by things that don't fit our earthly paradigms
6. Third, a prophet – Yes, and more than this, the greatest prophet of all times

B. Signs we get

1. A voice in the wilderness; note the highway in Is. 35:8
2. **Jesus answers John** -- fulfilled prophecy, numerous items from Isaiah 35 and other scriptures
3. Most importantly is "good news preached to the poor" from Isaiah 61:1
4. That Jesus fulfills the prophecies of the sacred writings is sufficient to satisfy John's doubts
5. Some people never get what they want from God, 16-19

6. They are not satisfied with whatever God does
7. This is faithlessness, but to entertain doubts from time to time is not

III. The Least in the Kingdom

A. Greater than John?

1. The least in the Kingdom is greater than John
2. I don't have the words to help you grasp this fully
3. No matter what your position in the church or in society, you valuable to God
4. One difference is the presence of God's Spirit within you
5. Another is your cleansing by the sacrifice of Christ

B. The best words I have

1. You are born of God, John 1:12-13
2. Made righteous, 1 Corinthians 6:11
3. Adopted as children of God, Gal. 4:4-6, no longer a slave
4. Romans 8:15-17, heirs of God that have no reason to fear
5. Ephesians 2:18-22, fellow citizens (with the privilege of accessing God), a dwelling place where God lives
6. 1 Peter 2:4-10, living stones, God's people

Conclusions:

1. We see the world through the lens of fulfilled Scripture.
2. Jesus has satisfied them.
3. When doubts arise, we look to the Word of God for assurance, not to worldly signs and wonders.
4. Not only are each one of us greater than John, but we are worth more than many sparrows.
5. We take heart knowing that God has assigned us a place in his heavenly dwelling.