

# Matthew 11:1-19

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Date: 13 March 2022

[ 0 : 00 ] I'm going to ask if you'll join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God with one another, found in Matthew chapter 11, starting in verse 1, going down to verse 19, and then we will pray.

When Jesus had finished giving instructions to his 12 disciples, that is the instructions to go do missions, right? When Jesus had finished giving instruction to his 12 disciples, he departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.

Now when John, while in prison, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, Are you the expected one or shall we look for someone else? Jesus answered and said to them, Go and report to John what you hear and see.

The blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who does not take offense at me.

As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John. What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing?

[ 0 : 59 ] Those who wear soft clothing are in king's palaces. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way before you.

Truly I say to you, among those born of women, there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. But to what shall I compare this generation?

It is like children sitting in the marketplaces, who call out to other children and say, We played the flute for you, and you did not dance. We sang a dirge, and you did not mourn. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He is a demon, or he has a demon.

And the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds. Let's pray.

[ 2 : 10 ] Lord, we thank you so much for allowing us to have this opportunity together, together as your people. Lord, we thank you for the great privilege it is of reading your word. And we pray that as we have read it together, we have seen it, Lord, that now that you would be present among us, and you would speak to our hearts and minds.

Lord, may there be clarity, and may there be understanding. And may the truth of your word captivate us. May it draw us closer to you. Lord, may we not leave changed or unchanged as a result of what we hear and see in your word.

Lord, have your way in each and every one of us, and you be glorified and honored. We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. The reason we see so little missional living is because we have so little of confident conviction.

And I want us to see from the text this morning how we can live with a confident conviction in the king. Living with a confident conviction in the king.

Because if we are confidently convicted of the reality that he is who he says he is, then we will do what he commanded us to do. The only way we can reconcile the reality that Jesus is king, and yet we do not obey, is because we do not really believe him.

[ 3 : 32 ] Because if we have a confident conviction, not just a partial conviction, and we have to be careful there, because the Bible tells us that even the demons believe and tremble, right?

There's a conviction there. There's a conviction that shakes them to their very core, that they believe in Jesus, and they tremble the reality of who he is. Unfortunately, so many of God's people today claim to believe, but yet they don't even tremble.

But we need to understand the confident conviction that comes, that we are called to live with, and to move our lives about with, so that we will obey him. Now, are we going to be perfect?

Absolutely not. Are we going to fail? Yes. Most assuredly, we're going to fail, because we in our humanity cannot help but fail. Because as Paul says, we are not yet what we should be, but he also says, but we press on towards the goal.

He was convicted of the reality that he will be like Jesus until the day when I see him as he is. And he disciplined himself and molded himself.

[ 4 : 35 ] He said, I discipline my body, and I bring myself into subjection, lest after I preach to others, I myself become guilty of the very thing that I'm declaring of. And it is this confident conviction of who Jesus is.

He is Savior, but he is also Lord, because the Bible says he is Lord and Savior. And one thing we need to be convicted of is the reality that, sure, he has forgiven us of our sins.

One of the things he uses is this doubt that creeps in. Am I really forgiven? Am I still going to be judged because of what I've done?

Or does God accept me as I am? Or am I really forgiven? And we see that he is Savior. And we need to have confidence in the Saviorhood of Christ, that he is able to freely forgive and to absolutely pardon and to absolutely make us as white as snow.

We need to have confidence not only in who he is as Savior, but also who he is as Lord, because if we separate the two, which Scripture never does, if we have him as Savior, but do not have him as Lord, then we rejoice in his forgiveness, but don't move any further.

[ 5 : 47 ] And if he is Lord, then we serve him. If we have him as Lord only and not as Savior, then we serve him as kind of servants. And those who fear and tremble, while fearing and trembling is a good thing, but we serve him out of fear and hope to be pleasing in his sight because we forget that we are absolutely freely forgiven.

And we need to have the balance that we are forgiven and he is Lord. And we need to have a confident conviction of that so that we can live as he's called us to live.

And we see this being played out for us or put on display for us in the first 19 verses of Matthew chapter 11. And we see it in the most unlikely of places, at least what we would consider the most unlikely of places.

And as we dig into the text, we see that it really is one of the most unlikely of places, and that is played out in the life of John, known as John the Baptist. So I want you to see just a number of things.

Number one, we see the shortcoming of man's greatest efforts. The shortcoming of man's greatest efforts.

[ 6 : 50 ] Because you do not become completely convicted of the reality that he is king by your own efforts or your own ability. You cannot so move or so behave or so educate yourself or even so immerse yourselves in the reality of Scripture that you will have just this absolutely unshaking confidence at all moments based upon your own efforts.

Because we see the shortcoming of man's greatest efforts and we see it in the life of John the Baptist. The Scripture tells us after Jesus had instructed his 12, and then he went out and he began to teach among their cities.

Now, we know this from other biblical texts that we've found recorded for us in the Synoptic Gospels, that as Jesus was going around, he was also doing these miraculous signs. And Herod heard of this, and Herod said, Who is this?

And Herod thought for a moment that John the Baptist had been resurrected. And he knew that wasn't the case because he himself had had John beheaded. So this was prior to the beheading of John. John is imprisoned here.

He has been brought in prison. He's been placed in bondage because of his stance for the truth of gospel. He challenged Herod and said, It's not right for you to take your brother's wife because it's not.

[ 8 : 03 ] And he started kind of really calling things what they were. And we know John. He wasn't really accepted. Many people went out to him. Multitudes of people went out to him. But one of the realities that we have declared is that if John the Baptist came behind the pulpits of many of our

churches, we would ask him to leave because he was known to call the religious people brood of vipers.

He was known to stand up to political leaders. He was known to say what it was and to call it as it is and to really have no qualms about it. Besides, he wasn't real, he was kind of unkempt because he wore camel's hair and he walked around eating locusts and wild honey.

And he was really just kind of a disheveled individual. But that was okay. He had a purpose there. And he had a very short ministry. But John the Baptist is imprisoned here during this time. And Jesus is going around teaching.

Now, this is what seems to be so striking to us because when Jesus was teaching and preaching throughout these cities and doing all these miraculous deeds, John, while imprisoned, heard about it. And as Herod heard about it, so did John.

And then John had this question. Now, on the surface, it seems simple, but we'll dig into it just a little bit. John's question was this. Are you the expected one or do we look for another? Now, the wording expected one, some say he was speaking code.

[ 9 : 16 ] He wasn't speaking code. He was speaking Jewish thought, right? The Jewish thought, the expected one, is the Messiah, is the king, is the one who would come deliver them from oppressive rule that reigned over them.

The expected one was the hope of Israel that everybody was looking for. And John is asking a question. Now, maybe I'm the only one that has an issue with that.

But I also remember that John is also the one that when he was baptizing and Jesus came to him, he said, Lord, I can't baptize you. You need to baptize me. And Jesus said, we must do this to fulfill all righteousness. And then he baptized him.

And John is also the one that while they were in the Jordan River, he saw the spirit descending upon him like a dove and heard God himself speak. Behold, this is my son in whom I am well pleased.

And it is also John the Baptist who is sitting there that when his disciples are around him and Jesus walks past it, John looks and says, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[ 10 : 14 ] By the way, the Bible is very clear and very specific in that John did not say he takes away the sins. He doesn't take away the bad things you do. He takes away the sin, the singular, the very person you are who takes away the sin of the world.

This is the same John who pointed to Jesus and said that. And then it says, And his disciples left him and followed him. Those were the first people to follow Jesus, right? Why did they follow him? Because John said, That's who you must follow.

And it is also John who said, He must increase, but I must decrease. But now while he's imprisoned, he said, Are you the expectant one? And see, I kind of take issue with the reality that John is now questioning.

But that shouldn't surprise us. Because our own life testifies to the truth that it is very easy to be bold and confident while in the brightness of the day and to be bold and confident when we are where we think we should be.

But in the darkest valley and in the valley of despair and in the moment when things seem to be falling apart, how easy it is in the flesh to wonder. How easy it is in the flesh to question what we have so confidently believed while in the brightness of the day.

[ 11 : 30 ] How easy it is in the moment of calling and in the moment of the heat of passion and in the moment of really being on the mountaintop, if you say, to boldly declare, He is the King.

But yet when everything gets quiet and everything gets still and things around you tend to get dark, then every one of us, whether we like to admit it or not, say, but is He really?

Is He really? See, one of the realities that may surprise a lot of people, but when you read church history, you understand it. And it's something that it causes people to kind of scratch their heads and want to know why these things go on.

And some of you know, I had the challenge, I have to be careful how I say this, I pastored or I preached the funeral message for what I would call my mentor in the faith, the individual I came to faith in Christ under and surrendered or answered the call to the ministry under, the very man who licensed me or was really declaring.

I had the calling to preach his funeral message after he took his own life. And some people say, well, how can this pastor do that?

[ 12 : 41 ] And, you know, I was wrestling with that. And one of the connections that Brother Randy Davis and I have, Brother Randy Davis came to me the day of the funeral, came down, which I was very thankful for because you're kind of on this island when you're the guy who has to preach that message, right?

Has to preach that funeral. Here's your mentor in the faith who just succumbed to the attacks of Satan has taken his own life and you have to preach that message before the family. Nobody was expecting it. And I was there at the church.

I was kind of on this island by myself and I was in this darkness. And Randy Davis walked up to me. He said, I want to pray with you. I want to pray for you. It's okay. He said, Billy Joe, I want you to know, he said, my mentor in the faith did the same thing. He said, six months later, his wife did it. And I preached both of their funerals. And some people say, how in the world could a pastor ever do that? What many people don't realize is that pastors suffer from depression probably at a greater rate than the average population.

Because it's easy here. But man, when it's dark there, the greatest efforts of man begin to show. The attacks and the battles.

[ 13 : 51 ] And here we have John the Baptist who's walked around saying, that is him, that is him, that is him, that is him. But now in that moment of isolation, in that moment of separation, in that moment of being away from everybody, he begins to question, are you the one?

And we see here the shortcomings of man's greatest efforts. Now before you discount John and say, well, John was just a crazy man who lived in the desert with the Essenes because that was a religious group at that time and he was out in this desert and maybe he ate too much locusts or maybe he ate too much honey and maybe if he didn't wear camel's hair, you know, maybe if he was normal like the rest of us, he'd be okay.

And before we discount John as being crazy, we need to see what Jesus has to say about him because Jesus says, what did you go out to the wilderness to see? Did you go out to see a reed shaken by the wind? Now to us, that makes no sense at all.

But to the Jewish people, what he was saying is that John wasn't one who would go back and forth in his convictions. John was a man who knew. There was a parable among the Jewish people of the oak tree and the reed and the oak tree would stand true no matter what.

He could fall or it would fall in the greatest of storms, but an oak tree didn't move. A reed was all constantly moving and going back and forth and the reed was constantly changing with every wind of direction. What he's saying is John was a man of settled convictions.

[ 15 : 08 ] John knew what he believed. He wasn't a man of easy believism, right? He was the oak tree. He wasn't that reed. And then Jesus goes on further and says that he was the greatest of men born of women.

And yet, with his position among mankind, we see him questioning. Because John came, and we don't understand how John came theologically, John came as the last Old Testament prophet. and is showing us the greatest efforts of man will never lead us to an absolutely confident conviction.

Because the best we can do will always fall short somewhere. And we need to accept that. The best we can do always has a limit.

We don't get to this reality in our own efforts. There's always a limit. Now, I'm not saying that John was lost. I believe one day I'll have the opportunity to speak to John the Baptist in glory, along with a number of other men who doubted in darkness, and women who doubted in darkness.

[ 16 : 28 ] We see the reality that the greatest efforts of man have their shortcomings. Number two, we see the sufficiency of testimonial evidence.

So how do we overcome these shortcomings? Because John sent his disciples to Jesus and said, Are you the one? Are you the expected one or do we look for another? And Jesus says, Go and tell him what you see and hear.

And we've seen this over and over again. The gospel message is not just what we say, it is also what we do. We see that in the book of Acts, right? People come to faith in Christ based on what they see and hear.

And even Jesus himself says, Go tell John what you see and hear. It is something to be heard, and it is also something to be witnessed, and it is something to be experienced, and you understand this.

And then Jesus goes and starts displaying a number of things here. He says, You know, the blind see, the deaf hear, the leopards are cleansed, the lame walk, and all these things. What he's doing, every one of these, if we go cross-reference them, every one of these are testimonial evidences found in the book of Isaiah.

[ 17 : 28 ] These are all declarations that the prophet Isaiah said would accompany the coming of the king, every one of them.

And what Jesus is declaring, Go tell John that everything that was declared about me is coming about through me. That everything that was foretold is being witnessed and seen.

Now, Jesus stops short because there's one passage that he does not quote. Jesus does not say, and he came to set the captives free because that also is in the book of Isaiah.

And he intentionally didn't say that because to set the captives free, John would have said, So I'm about to be released, right? I'm in prison right now. And that's not necessarily the freedom that the king of kings came to do.

It is the freedom from sin, our bond is to sin. And those realities that John wasn't really ready for because he's in his moment. But he declares to him the sufficiency here of the testimony.

[ 18 : 26 ] He says, That which has been foretold about me is being exhibited or displayed in me, and this is enough. Now, the reason this is important to us is because we understand the reality.

Jesus does not have to prove himself because Jesus has already fulfilled everything that was ever told about him. We don't need him to prove himself to us because there is sufficient testimony about him that is enough evidence for faith.

The reality is that every Old Testament prophecy of the first coming of Christ has been absolutely fulfilled in Jesus himself. Someone once said, and I didn't do the math and I'll never claim to have done the math, but someone gave the statistical odds of that happening of an individual coming to life and living and fulfilling every prophecy which Jesus fulfilled.

just to be that individual because some people say, oh, it's coincidental it happened and it's just something random like that. Someone gave us a squad and said for some individual to do that, it would be like taking the whole state of Texas, that's a pretty big state, right, it would be like taking the whole state of Texas and filling the entire state of Texas up with quarters two foot deep.

Okay, so two foot deep of quarters throughout the whole state of Texas and somewhere inside that state of Texas and that two foot deep of quarters across the whole state, taking one quarter and painting it black and putting it somewhere in there and then me blindfolding you and sending you to the state of Texas while blindfolded and tell you to pick up one quarter and the odds of the reality that you would pick up that quarter that was black on your first chance is the same odds that would be if any individual ever came to life and fulfilled every testimonial witness of the Old Testament that Jesus did.

[ 20 : 13 ] It is literally a mathematical impossibility and what Jesus is saying is the scripture is sufficient. This is the same thing actually when Jesus tells the story of Lazarus and the rich man, right, remember when Lazarus dies and the rich man, not Lazarus who he brought back to life, but Lazarus who was a beggar at the rich man's gate and then Lazarus goes and he's in Abraham's bosom and then the rich man is there and then the rich man is calling out and says send Lazarus back and he can tell my brothers and if someone arises from the dead then they will believe and Abraham calls out and says no, if they won't believe the scripture then they won't believe even someone who came back to life because what we have in scripture is sufficient testimony to the evidence of the reality of who Jesus is.

Too often we try to find extra biblical evidence and while it is there all this historical reality all these things as someone said that the spade and the shovel that's dug into the ground in archaeology always confirms scripture never denies the reality of it we see this over and over and over again but we don't need those things we don't need those things because this is sufficient evidence this alone is sufficient and this alone is what Christ himself pointed to when he was hoping to instill a little hope and confidence so what I'm saying is maybe you're in that dark moment saying is he the expected one or am I looking for another friend before you start looking anywhere else go to the Bible and to the Bible alone and when you get into the word God's word has a way of dismissing every doubt every fear every distraction

God's word has an answer for everything that would cause us in that moment of darkness it shines a light upon our darkest moment it is as the psalmist says a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path this is sufficient unfortunately what happens for so many people is when we get in that dark

cell of doubts the very last place we turn to is the word of God when all along Christ is saying to the scripture to the scripture to the scripture this is sufficient this alone is sufficient and I don't care if you're reading anywhere from Genesis to Revelation wherever you read it is sufficient evidence to who he is it all points to me number three we try to make our way quickly for the sake of your time number three this should make us kind of set up a little straighter in our seats if we see the shortcomings of the greatest efforts of man and we see the sufficient testimony as evidence number three we are reminded of the superior position of kingdom individuals we are reminded of the superior position of kingdom individuals

Jesus declares that of those born of women none has arisen that is greater than John the Baptist none of those born of women there was no one greater than John the Baptist but then the very next sentence says but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than him he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than him some of you are following the reading plan that my wife and I are following some of you are following other reading plans but if you're following that particular reading plan you know that today you are reading in John chapter 3 and in John chapter 3 a man came to Jesus by night and a man's name was Nicodemus Nicodemus came to him by night and he had all these deep dark questions and Jesus in the darkest of night made a very simple statement unless a man is born again he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven you can only go so far being born of women and John the Baptist is the limit and Nicodemus says well how can a man be born again he cannot enter into his mother's womb a second time can he

Jesus says no Jesus was speaking of the spiritual birth right to be reborn to be renewed and he said the spirit blows where it wants and no man knows where and he begins to speak of all this and he says for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that he who believes in him will never perish right and he begins to lift him up and he starts speaking of the reality and here he talks of the superior position of kingdom people we are not better because we've moved further along than John we are better because we have been born again and as Paul says in Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified in Christ nevertheless I live and it is no longer me who lives but it is Christ who lives in me our superior position is not a result of our efforts it is not a result of our works it is not a result of our education it is not a result of all of our equipment it is not a result of all of our resources it is not a result of all of those things the superior position comes as a reality that we die to ourselves and we are born again behold all things have been made new this is why

[ 25 : 24 ] I've said over and over again I don't care where he puts me I'll live in a broom closet and I'll sweep the streets of gold if that's what he's called me to do in glory because I know that a street sweeper in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the highest ruler in the kingdom of this world and I am absolutely convinced of that absolutely convinced of that I don't get star struck I don't get awestruck people don't overwhelm me anymore people don't I don't get blown out of the way of who I may encounter because I know that the man who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than whoever is greatest in the kingdom of this world and until we live with that reality until we understand the superior position we have attained through faith in Christ and faith alone until we realize that and until we settle that matter in our heart we will not live with confidence in this life I've told people over and over again we need to be careful and I don't mean this flippantly and I don't mean this to be boasting

Paul says I can't boast in anything but Christ so I want you to hear my heart in this but we also don't want to walk around with a false sense of humility we want to beat our chest in prayers as woe is me I am a sinner we also need to be careful where we in a false sense of humility say oh I'm just a sinner saved by grace and we are sinners saved by grace but listen to me friend those sinners saved by grace are also called saints you're a saint and when we begin to see ourselves as he's defined us and we begin to live with a little greater confidence I don't mean cockiness but a sinner saved by grace focuses on what I have done the reality that he calls me a saint focuses on what he has done Paul writing church at Corinth it had all kinds of problems the worst church you will find in scripture is the church at Corinth and he opens that letter before he hands somebody over to Satan before he does all these things of rebuking and chastising and correcting and casting people out of the church he introduces himself to this people and he says to the saints that are at Corinth and the man he handed over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh was for the preserving of his soul and he called that man a saint too so if Paul can look at a man in all of his wretchedness and say I'm giving him to Satan so that Satan will take him out of this life but he's still a saint now listen to this we're not magnifying the work of that man we're magnifying the position Christ has given him and I

don't walk around calling myself a saint because it shows anything about me because I know me it shocks me that he calls me a saint and it reminds me of the position he's put me in now listen if the king of kings and lord of lords calls me a saint I could care less what anybody in this world calls me it really doesn't matter and if I have a superior position in the kingdom of heaven than anyone in this life can ever hope to attain then my hope is not in this world and now they may get mad they may get befuzzled and they may get disgruntled and they may get upset because I tell them about my king but in the end it really doesn't matter because I have a greater reality than what most people are hoping in we see the superior position of kingdom individuals fourth and finally the sad reality of a multitude of people the sad reality of a multitude of people these are truths that Christ himself is declaring to us these are truths that we stand upon with the confident conviction of who he is that he is the king of kings and lord of lords but the sad reality of a multitude of people

Jesus says and what shall I compare this generation to they're like children in the marketplace now this saying doesn't make much sense to us but when we break it down in layman's term it does he said we played a happy song for you but you didn't want to dance we played a morning song for you but you didn't want to cry we don't know what you want to do because John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking and you say oh he's a man who is demon possessed the son of man came eating and drinking and having a great time and fellowshiping with sinners and you say oh he's a gluttonous man and he's a sinner what is he saying is the multitude the majority of this world will find a way to not believe no matter how they come John came abstaining they said oh he's too radical Jesus came not abstaining he came doing everything to people he came and met them they said oh that's too far we want this perfect medium the sad reality of a multitude of people is that most people don't want to believe no matter how you come with them no matter how you meet them Paul says I have become all things to all people that I may win them more but he also never said so that he may win them all because when he became as a Jew to the Jews the non-Jews would mock him when he became as a non-Jew to the non-Jews the Jewish people would mock him it really doesn't matter the sad reality is is most people just don't want to believe and that's okay because that's out of our realm we're just called to be faithful in what we claim we believe we must be faithful in what we profess to believe and the only way that comes is with a confident conviction of the reality of the king that he is who he says he is and because of that we're going to live as he's called us to live let's pray Lord we thank you for this day thank you for your many blessings upon us we thank you for the reality of your word and we pray now

Lord through the power and presence of your spirit not through the word of man but through the efforts of man Lord by the presence of your spirit that you would convict us mold us and shape us Lord move us to become your people for your glory and yours alone and we ask it all in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen Amen

[ 33 : 29 ] Amen Amen Amen

Amen Amen Amen

Amen Amen Amen

Amen Amen Amen

Amen Amen Amen

[ 40 : 59 ] Amen Amen Amen

Amen Amen