

we talked about who we are...salt and light...however being salt and light does not exempt you and I from experiencing a Crisis of faith...brought on by a crises in life...

Freedom happens when you abandon how you think it ought to be and you embrace what actually is...and doing that you realize your resources are scant...you really need God!

In the Gospel of Luke...we encounter John the Baptist experiencing a crisis of faith...First a little about John...

John the Baptist is one of the best-known people of The Bible. And for good reason - he played a unique role in what, and Who, was to come. John was a prophet who was prophesied over 700 years before (Isaiah 40:3-5) -. The angel Gabriel separately announced the coming births of Jesus Christ and John the Baptist. John was a Levite. His father Zechariah was a Temple priest, and his mother Elizabeth was also descended from Aaron. Jesus Christ and John the Baptist were related. Their mothers, Mary and Elizabeth, were cousins. John the Baptist was born 6 months before Jesus Christ. He died about a year before Jesus Christ.

John had a popular ministry. "People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea, and the whole region of The Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

John described his ministry this way... we pick up his answer and story

LK 3: ¹⁵ Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered their questions by saying, "I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.^[b] ¹⁷ He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire." ¹⁸ John used many such warnings as he announced the Good News to the people.

- **His message was one of repent from sin and do good for judgment is coming.....for the Messiah is coming to Judge the unrighteous and set up the Kingdom of God...he will do away with all wrong doers and only the good will remain...**
- **And when he baptized Jesus ...John said this about him....**

MT 3: 11 "I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

- **You and I need to understand something here... ..This indicates that John the Baptist's baptism was not Christian baptism; for in the latter they could not have been baptized without hearing of the Holy Spirit."**
- **so this great prophet...was darkened somewhat in his timing of what God was doing...and the method's Jesus would later employ**
- **even though God the father showed him...the Holy spirit when Jesus was baptized...**

JN 1: 32 Then John testified, "I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. 33 I didn't know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'

- **For Jesus' command in Baptizing People was the Trinitarian baptism given to the Apostles after the resurrection of Jesus...**

MT 28: 18 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Jesus was coming for salvation from Judgment...not for Judgment...Johns statement after baptizing Jesus was

John 3:30 He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less. 31 "He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the

earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else.

He makes a great and intentional decision...stepping out of the limelight but he has limited understanding of what less truly means...his idea of less and God's idea of less are not the same thing....

LK 4: 16 When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. 17 The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written: 18 “The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, 19 and that the time of the LORD’s favor has come.” 20 He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. 21 Then he began to speak to them. “The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!”

- **In quoting Isaiah 61 Jesus intentionally leaves out the part of the verse that call for Judgment...that will happen in his second coming...**
- **So we have the making of Johns Crisis of faith...a misunderstanding of Jesus mission...of salvation first...and the cross...before Judgment...**
- **That is always the soil of a crsis of faith...thinking we know what God is going to do and often how he ought to do things**
- **A year passes... and Jesus popularity is at an all time high..he raises a boy from the dead...**
- *LK 7:16 13 When the Lord saw her, his heart overflowed with compassion. “Don’t cry!” he said. 14 Then he walked over to the coffin and touched it, and the bearers stopped. “Young man,” he said, “I tell you, get up.” 15 Then the dead boy sat up and began to talk! And Jesus gave him back to his mother. 16 Great fear swept the crowd, and they praised God, saying, “A mighty prophet has risen among us,” and “God has visited his people today.” 17 And the news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding countryside.*

- **Meanwhile At 31 years of age..Johns ministry comes to a screeching halt...as he is imprisoned for calling out Herod on the sin of marrying his sister in law and the general immorality of the King...**
- **So John's disciples hear what Jesus is doing and yet all this injustice is going on in John's life...you know the one who introduced Jesus to the world... ..and Jesus doing nothing about it!**

LK 7:18 The disciples of John the Baptist told John about everything Jesus was doing. So John called for two of his disciples, ¹⁹ and he sent them to the Lord to ask him, “Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting,^[b] or should we keep looking for someone else?” ²⁰ John’s two disciples found Jesus and said to him, “John the Baptist sent us to ask, ‘Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?’”

- **John knew Jesus...in fact he introduced to the world when he baptized Jesus and saw the Holy Spirit descend upon him...and God the Father speak of him...he knew who he was...he even stated he must increase I must decrease..**
- **and he was quite aware of all the miracles and teaching Jesus had been doing...all signs of Jesus Messiahship...**
- **but he had expectations of what he thought the Messiah would do...and how his role as the cousin prophet would unfold...and it was not happening that way...like not at all...worse than not at all ...he was in prison and soon to be beheaded**

There are at least three reasons John doubted...Jesus as the Messiah...

- 1. He was in prison... he was in isolation...left to his own thoughts.....John was a man of action it would be extremely difficult for him to be out of action in a hot and desolate prison ...sidelined in life... many of us struggle with doubt during seasons of isolation...alone...and Jesus did not seem to be doing anything about it...**
- 2. John was emotionally drained...and disillusioned...he had served God with all his strength, even to the point of confronting Herod for his sexual indiscretions...he was emotionally spent...burned out... Anyone can become exhausted. What is so poignant about burnout is that it mainly**

strikes people who are highly committed to their work: You can only "burn out" if you have been "on fire" in the first place. Again, Only people highly committed and deeply devoted are candidates for disillusionment...he did nothing but good and it backfired on him **and Jesus did not seem to be doing anything about it...**

3. Where is the Justice....The messiah was not acting like the messiah he thought he should...where was the winnowing fork of justice?? **And Jesus did not seem to be doing anything about it...**

So what is Jesus doing?...nothing about judging people...but healing them...loving them...helping all who will come to him..

LK 7: 21 At that very time, Jesus cured many people of their diseases, illnesses, and evil spirits, and he restored sight to many who were blind. 22 Then he told John's disciples, "Go back to John and tell him what you have seen and heard—the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor."

You see the problem John had was that he was looking for what he wanted Jesus to do now!...and was missing what Jesus was actually doing now...

You see Jesus is always doing something ...look for that...pay attention to that...

1. And secondly... the problem John had is the same we deal with also....Jesus' timing... if he is going to bring Justice ...why am I in prison unjustly? Why are the Jewish people not flocking to you? Why are the gentiles so receptive to you? You are really bumming me out!!!

- But God does not leave us in that state if we choose to apply the remedy he has for us...**

Luke 7:23 And he added, "God blesses those who do not fall away because of me."

- On account of the way I do my job... Faith is not faith until it's all you're holding on too. one's faith must run deep to endure trials and persecution... **When you can't trace God's hand, trust His heart. remember the past** The antidote...**

- **Because trials will cause us to question our preconceived ideas ...on how life should work... The solution...keep your eyes on Jesus...no matter what...**

What message Jesus sends back to John ...is reread the Isaiah 61 and stop in the middle of verse two...preceding the judgment part....favor precedes Judgment..

ISA 61:1 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, ^{ISA 61:2} to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,

So does Jesus scold John for his crises of faith...caused by trouble and misunderstanding??? No... I am so glad God sees the whole video tape of my life, and not just a snapshot of where I am now...or what I have done in the past...

John doubts Jesus and Jesus brags on him!!!

LK 7:24 After John's disciples left, Jesus began talking about him to the crowds. "What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of wind?"

- **He is bragging on the strength of the character of John...after all even in prison He is true to his mission...sending messengers to ask Jesus...are you him...or should I keep looking?**
- **There is no quit in the man.. Jesus goes on in his bragging...**

Luke 7: 25 Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people who wear beautiful clothes and live in luxury are found in palaces. ²⁶ Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet. ²⁷ John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say, 'Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way before you.' ²⁸ I tell you, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of God is greater than he is!" ²⁹ When they

heard this, all the people—even the tax collectors—agreed that God’s way was right, for they had been baptized by John.

John is the last of the O.T. prophets...those who prepared the way for Jesus... He is the greatest because he actually introduced him to the world..

- Yet all of us who have come after the Lord...will know him as the resurrected King...our witness is complete so we possess greater knowledge than all the O.T. prophets.
- **That is why we can say without a doubt ...go to Jesus... And when in doubt...go to Jesus..**
- Everyone in here ..is like John in this way... we may have been down but we still have hope ...

Even in a pile of manure, a flower will grow.

- As many of us know, a crises of faith can be dark and deep. It can seem to be an eternal part of our lives, but hope is always close at hand.
- Hope is our first look away from the problem. When despair rules the day and the night, there seems to be no way out. We wonder if this feeling of hopelessness will ever pass.
- It is in moments like these that hope is born. There stirs in us the possibility of an answer. We wonder if life can be different.
- Hope is needed by the human family. It keeps us going in difficult times. In fact, hope can be the only thing that keeps the hounds of despair at bay. Hope keeps us going, but it never gets us to where we want to go. This is the work of faith.
- Faith is the bridge between hope and the answer and the new life that await us. **the Messiah is still the one you witnessed... you will weather the now, and I will speak blessing over you...in the midst of your trial...and you will be blessed in the future...**
- John had to fight his inner voices of doubt, disappointment, confusion, being beat up and burnt out... we have to fight ours...
- He like all of us was made up of strengths and weaknesses
- Faith and doubt...sinner and saint..
- Comprehending some things clearly and some dimly...some not at all

- But he sought the Lord in his doubt...when he felt like a failure...may we do the same..
- With his greatest fear of misleading people about Jesus...he ran to Jesus...he thought he had missed his purpose...but he was not giving in...
- In your Crisis of Faith...Do not give up or give in....
- So John in prison made the decision to not fall away to keep following Jesus...how do we know? he was not released by Herod...which means he did not change his statement ...to be released...he did not say it was ok for Herod now to marry his brother's wife...
- his decision now to honor God would change his life in the natural and spiritual legacy...remember he is only about 32 years old ...where is the blessing?
- not long after ...In chapter fourteen we read of his death...

Matt 14:10 So John was beheaded in the prison, ¹¹ and his head was brought on a tray and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. ¹² Later, John's disciples came for his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened. ¹³ As soon as Jesus heard the news, he left in a boat to a remote area to be alone....

- After he was killed, John's disciples came and buried his body, and then went and told Jesus all that had happened (Matthew 14:12). Jesus responded to the news of John's death by saying, "John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light." (John 5:35)
- Jesus got into a boat had his disciples set sail for a remote place where he could grieve He grieved the loss of his cousin, friend and prophet...

Matt 14: 13.....But the crowds heard where he was headed and followed on foot from many towns. ¹⁴ Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. ¹⁵ That evening the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves." ¹⁶ But Jesus said, "That isn't necessary—you feed them." ¹⁷ "But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish!" they answered. ¹⁸ "Bring them here," he

said. ¹⁹ Then he told the people to sit down on the grass. Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he gave the bread to the disciples, who distributed it to the people. ²⁰ They all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers. ²¹ About 5,000 men were fed that day, in addition to all the women and children!

Johns death leads directly to the greatest mass miracle Jesus performed in his life on earth... to the feeding of way more than 5000 people...in a remote place...exactly like the environment John used to preach at...remote places..

John 6:14 When the people saw him do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, "Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!"

Just as John stated when he baptized him... John would be most blessed...5000 people heard the good news of Jesus...and that is just the beginning....2000 years later this man also blesses us, in being an example of Faith in Crsis!

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John's ministry, and life, came to an end when he admonished Herod (see [The Herods](#)) for his sinful behavior (Luke 3:19-20). He was imprisoned at Machaerus, a fortress about 9 miles (15 kilometers) east of the Dead Sea. There, he was beheaded.

Let me share something with you Jesus said:

MT 11: 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

- **You see...The Kingdom of Heaven moves forward against much opposition**
- **Those willing to move forward with the Kingdom will the force it takes to overcome opposition... thy will experience it...**
- *John had to fight his inner voices of doubt, disppointment, confusion, being beat up and burnt out... we have to fight ours...*
- *He like all of us was made up of strengths and weaknesses*
- *Faith and doubt...sinner and saint..*
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- **In your Crisis of Faith...Do not give up or give in....**

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You know we would be better off right today...**if we understood this truth...**

Some of your greatest fears will become your become reality...

- **why? is that a great truth...**Because some of them already have become your reality...and look we are still here ...and we are OK...and through many of them we have grown and become better people...
- Which in reality makes them not fears or failures...but stepping stones...

Think about it...name something you dreaded happening that happened...

- It changed you...and good things came from it...not all perhaps but many...
- We learned, we were stronger than we thought, could endure more than we thought bearable...we went on when we thought we could not...we understand the human condition In greater ways that we understood before...
- though horrible it was not the end us as we thought it would...
- so what is the purpose

But you see Jesus...he is never afraid of anything... for he knows the beginning from the end...he knows how it will turn out...and it will turn out as he wants it to....

- He never fears that what he does will not turn out well...that is why calling out to Jesus is the wisest choice you can ever make, at any time in any circumstance...

*JN 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. **In this world** you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

John 3:³⁰ He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less. ³¹ "He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else."³²

Put this scripture on the screen during the skit...

RO 8: 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When you can't trace God's hand, trust His heart.

- **Jesus now deals with the now of his closest supporter, the prophet John....and John's now is one of confusion and disappointment...**
- **At 31 years of age..Johns ministry comes to a screeching halt...as he is imprisoned for calling out Herod on the sin of marrying his sister in law**

*Matt 11: 1 When Jesus had finished giving these instructions to his twelve disciples, he went out to teach and preach in towns throughout the region. ² John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, ³ **"Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?"***

- John knew Jesus...in fact he introduced to the world when he baptized Jesus and saw the Holy Spirit descend upon him...and God the Father speak of him...he knew who he was...he even stated he must increase I must decrease..
- and he was quite aware of all the miracles and teaching Jesus had been doing...all signs of Jesus Messiahship...
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- John you have been chosen to be a prophet...and you are getting the whole of what being a prophet means... direct revelations and power from God...you have great influence even though you dress in skins and eat locusts, powerful people come out to hear you....you are a life changer... **your past has led to your now...**
- and now you also get to experience what most prophets did ...the death of a martyr...which is not what you expected...
- **the Messiah is still the one you witnessed... you will weather the now, and I will speak blessing over you...in the midst of your trial...and you will be blessed in the future...**

⁷ As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began talking about him to the crowds.

- **why would Jesus talk to the crowds?** John just questioned who he was in front of everyone....John or Jesus were wrong...John displayed confusion and disappointment in Jesus...in front of everyone..
- **Jesus just simply addressed the heart of john...then he brags on him...who brags on someone who just fronted you off? that is intentional love and being intentional with your words! listen**

“What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of wind? ⁸ Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people with expensive clothes live in palaces. ⁹ Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet. ¹⁰ John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say, ‘Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way before you.’¹¹ “I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is!

- **but you new testament disciple of min will do even greater things....**
- **So John in prison made the decision to not fall away to keep following Jesus...how do we know? he was not released by Herod...which means he did not change his statement ...to be released...he did not say it was ok for Herod now to marry his brother's wife...**
- **his decision now to honor God would change in the natural and spiritual his destiny...**
- **remember he is only about 32 years old**
- **where is the blessing?**

not long after ...In chapter fourteen we read of his death...

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John 6:14 When the people saw him do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, “Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!”

- **John would be most proud...knowing he made the right decision**
- **And that is not all this directly leads to Jesus great miracle of walking on the water...**

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John though a prophet of God...did not know all the Lord’s will or ways...just like us... and he must learn like all of us...When you can't trace God's hand, trust His heart.

*JN 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. **In this world** you will have trouble. But take **heart!** I have overcome the world."*

Heart refers to attitude...

- **And that in a nutshell is the story of our journey... regularly finding our selves twenty miles south of where we thought we would be... often out of resources...except for God**

I think I will start doing Marriage counseling for couples a year after their wedding ...after they thought they reached the promised land at their wedding...but find themselves now twenty south of where they thought they would be ...they might even begin to miss Egypt!

Because Now they begin to understand the true cost of having a marriage they truly want... the laying down of your life becomes a reality!

*****Freedom happens when you abandon how you think it ought to be and you embrace what actually is...and doing that you realize your resources are scant...you need God!**

Marriage is a great example but this is true for all people at all times...,

The great challenge of our faith is to learn to follow God...as he takes us regularly twenty miles south of where we thought we should be.

The central challenge for us followers of Jesus is giving up the expectation of Knowing where we are going...

Following Jesus is like jumping into a stream heading in a certain direction, but the direction may change, the water may get rough, the current strong...we won't know until the end what entering the stream at the beginning means...

But all our growth takes place in the journey on the stream not when we reach its destination...

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- **stick to imitating Jesus ...acting like Jesus will stick to you**

EPH 5: ¹ Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. ² Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us² and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

First of all...to imitate God you must be a child of God... It is always...First Relationship first change...or imitation

- As His children we are known and loved individually and as one of all His children we are loved equally, there are no favorites.
- **...If we do not rest in our relationship to God the Father as beloved children, we will live auditioning for the position continually grading ourselves on our performance, rather than obeying and imitating Him simply as faithful children.**
- We imitate God, and that we are to do that by walking in sacrificial love.
- **Love is the goal of the Christian life.** It is one thing against which there is no law. . . which means it is always right to do...
- **How do you love sacrificially? simple you give up your focus on your rights in relationships and focus on your responsibilities in relationships... like Jesus did..**

So if you belong to God...

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) 17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

- *though we are alive in Christ we still get to choose how to live...*
- ****Perhaps it is frightening for us to realize that we have chosen to live our life as it is today...the Good News is that if you don't like what you see right now, you can CHOOSE to make things different and begin to pursue the life we were created to live.***

Paul wrote later in his life to the church in Corinth something that he truly experienced...

- ***Life should progressively look different for all of us who are in Christ...He changes us and reshapes us and redirects us!...we realize our lives have been planned by God with a purpose in our generation...and it will fit us!!**
- **we must be properly dressed for all occasions of service...for the second coming...for our marriages, for our singleness, we must be dressed for the unexpected visitor...disappointment, loss, pain...blessing prosperity...**

Romans 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.^[c] Do not be conceited.

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"^[d] says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."^[e] ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Phil 2:³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.