

**3rd Sunday of Advent**  
**Interrupting Despair**  
**Matthew 11: 1-6**

*“Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?”--John the Baptist*

**Consider with me...**

- The \_\_\_\_\_ of despair
  
- The \_\_\_\_\_ of despair
  
- The \_\_\_\_\_ of despair

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**Message Application:**

John the Baptist was rotting in prison. Over forty years of ministry in one way or another I have spent time visiting prisoners. I have ministered to inmates in the Cook County lockup, at the Joliet prison and several jails. I can tell you that these are places of despair. The separation from family can be devastating. The danger these people find themselves in on a daily basis can leave a hole deep in their mind and heart. Hope seems to go out the window. I have seen people I have known for years turn into cynical, bitter, and fearful men and women.

This is where we find John the Baptizer on this third Sunday of Advent. This is the one who introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God. He had preached of Jesus’ coming and didn’t hold back preaching that the judgment of Israel was at hand.

Prison messes with your head. John had gone from preaching to crowds to being chained in Herod’s prison and the prospect of release was growing dim. News had reached the prophet that Jesus wasn’t using his winnowing fork to separate the

righteous of Israel from the unrighteous. No, instead Jesus was dining with tax collectors and sinners! He was speaking of love and forgiveness. John's visions of Jesus on a white horse waging war against the Romans was not coming. So John starts wondering, *"Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?"*

Don't look down on John for his doubt, unless you are without the same doubt. I know I have had similar doubts about Jesus' actions. Doubt itself is not an evil thing. Asking the hard questions is not a bad thing; just as long as you're truly looking for an answer and not using your question as an excuse to be your own savior.

John asked and Jesus answered. By quoting Isaiah 35, Jesus says, "Yes I'm the guy." John needn't worry. Everything John preached would come to pass. It would come to pass in God's way and on God's timetable. Repentance and forgiveness first. The pulling down of false teaching must be dealt with. The sin problem had to be paid for.

I think that our doubt comes from trying to fit Jesus into some neat little box that reflects our wants, politics, desires and beliefs. The problem is Jesus the Christ the Son of the living God will not stay in the box we've made.

This week I ask you to think about your despair. It might be your health or your finances or your relationship with people. Maybe it's the general state of our culture! Wherever your despair springs from; I want you to take it to Jesus.

Instead of asking him the "Why" question, why is this happening to me? Ask him the "What" question. What are you teaching me Lord? What needs to change in my life? What am I holding onto that is holding me back from being like you, Jesus?

The "What" questions are good. They will open you to Jesus' rule in your life and his power working through you.

I pray you find joy today instead of doubt.

Grace & Peace,

Wm. Lyons