

Matthew 11:1-30 | “Go to Jesus”  
*Preached on September 10, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown*

You can turn in your Bibles this morning to Matthew 11. *[pause]*

We are continuing our study in the book of Matthew, looking especially at the theme of discipleship.

We are seeing how we should view Jesus and what He calls us to. *[pauseeeee]*

Let's say that there was someone coming to an event who was to bring a talk on how to handle finances better. *[pause]*

Like with most things, people would respond differently to that person's talk. *[pause]*

We could probably group these people into different categories...

First, you would have the *doubters*.

They would be the people, who have these high-up expectations of what this person and event would look like, but nothing ever matches their expectations.

As they are sitting there, they are thinking, “I was expecting something different. I was expecting someone smarter. I was expecting something more deep than this. I doubt this is going to be good.” *[pauseeee]*

So you would have the *doubters*, but you'd also have the *rejectors*.

This is the group of people, who may not even show up to the event, or if they attend, their ears are closed off to the content.

Why?

They pridefully think they know better.

If they hear about the talk, they think, “I know more than that guy, so I'm not going. I don't need it. It's not for me.” *[pause]*

So to the knowledge of this talk on money, there would be *doubters* and *rejectors*, but thirdly, they would be those who are *receptive*.

These people don't have crazy expectations about the event, but simply think, “Whatever it turns out to be, I could learn something from it.”

They are humbly willing to learn and be taught, for they recognize that they need help.

They have been worn down and weary from trying to handle their finances on their own, and want to find a solution.

So they go to the event eager to listen, receive, and grow. *[pauseeee]*

As you can see, there was only one event (a talk on money), but there were multiple responses to that one event...

Some doubted, some rejected, and others were receptive. *[pause]*

In a similar way, what we will find this morning in our text is there are multiple responses to Jesus.

Some people doubt Him, others reject Him, but thankfully, there are those who humbly receive Him.

And what we will learn is that how you respond to Jesus is infinitely and eternally more important than how you respond to some financial talk. *[pause]*

So let's see what message Christ has for each group who respond differently to Him.

*First...*

### **I. A message for the doubters. (1-6)**

You know how some people, like sports players, speak to doubters?

They talk trash, and try to put it in the face of doubters, by saying, "Just watch, I'm gonna prove you all wrong!"

Yet how does Jesus respond to doubters? *[pause]*

Certainly not like many sports players, for we will see the calm way that He responds to the doubts of John the Baptist.

Look there at verses 1-6. *[READ]*

So at this point, John the Baptist is in prison, and he has heard of what's going on with Jesus.

But he has some doubts about Him, and he's wondering, "Is there someone else still coming? Or is Jesus really the guy?" *[pauseeee]*

Now why is it that John the Baptist has some doubts about Jesus? *[pause]*

It seems as though John doubted Jesus' identity due to *unmet expectations*. *[pause]*

The Lord had used John the Baptist to be the forerunner to Christ to get the people's hearts ready for their Savior.

And in his message, he preached both salvation and judgment, and that the wrath of God is coming, for “the axe is laid to the root of the trees.”<sup>1</sup> *[pause]*

But now as he hears about Jesus, he doesn't see this dramatic judgment arrive like he thought. *[pause]*

He may have been expecting a political savior like many other Jews at that time.

But all he has been hearing about is Jesus' preaching and deeds, but no judgment. *[pauseeee]*

His unmet expectations were probably compounded by the fact that he's sitting in prison. *[pause]*

If the Messiah has truly arrived, how is he in jail?

Shouldn't victory be here?

Why does it look so much like defeat? *[pause]*

It didn't add up in the mind of John the Baptist, so was Jesus truly the Christ? *[pauseeeee]*

You see, John's struggles remind us that we need to beware of our expectations, for unmet expectations can cause doubt when our experiences don't align with our expectations. *[pauseee]*

I've seen this happen time and time again in people who are newly saved.

They have this expectation that once they become a Christian all of their problems will just fade away. *[pause]*

I've even heard someone say, “Since I've turned back to Christ, my job at work has just gotten so much better.”

And I was worried for them because I was thinking, “What happens when they go through a bad stretch at the workplace? Will they just give up on Christ?” *[pause]*

You see, some people think being a Christian means all victory and success on this side of Heaven, but Jesus just told us a chapter earlier that we will face hardship and difficulty for His name. *[pauseeeee]*

What about you?

What incorrect expectations do you have of Christ or of the Christian life?

Don't allow your expectations to supersede the truth, for when life smashes up against our expectations, we can start to doubt and think, “Is all of this true?” *[pauseee]*

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 3:10.

Some people expect Jesus to make their life comfortable and easy, and doubt Him when it doesn't happen.

Some people expect a political Savior who is more in your face and aggressive, and who will put down the political party that they can't stand.

But we must believe who Jesus is, not who we expect Him to be. *[pause]*

We must not trust our own expectations or experiences, but we must believe the Word. *[pause]*

That's really where Jesus points John to.

Jesus responds to John by saying in verse 4, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them." *[pause]*

Jesus pointed John the Baptist back to what the Word of God said about the promised Messiah, and back especially where in Isaiah it prophesied that the coming One would do those things.<sup>2</sup> *[pause]*

So Jesus is saying, "Look at what I'm doing and line it up with what Scripture says, and you have your answer."

He fulfills Scripture, and that means that He is the One who was to come. *[pauseeee]*

It's interesting that Jesus didn't do anything snazzy to quell the doubts of John, but He pointed Him to look at what's happening through the lens of Scripture.

And this is the solution to *our* doubts, too -- we look to Christ and His Word. *[pause]*

We are not to put all the weight in our experiences or our expectations.

No, we stand firm on the Word and the work of Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

Your doubts should always prompt you to say, "What am I relying upon right now?"

"Am I putting too much weight in my unmet expectations?"

"Am I putting too much emphasis on my experience?"

"Or am I trusting God's Word, and putting my faith there?" *[pauseeee]*

Maybe for you, your doubts have been like John's, you are wondering if Jesus is who He says He is.

Look to Jesus and His work, for they line up with who God promised He would be.

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<sup>2</sup> See Isaiah 35:5-6, 61:1. Also, Isaiah 26:19, 29:18, 42:18.

Don't stumble over the fact that Jesus is not who you expect Him to be, but look at who He is and what He has done: He's the promised One. *[pauseeee]*

This is why Jesus says in verse 6, "And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

He's calling us to faith, and not to let our unmet expectations cause us to stumble over Him. *[pauseeee]*

Some want a Jesus, who lets them do what they want.

Some want a Jesus, who never steps on their toes.

Some want a Jesus, who deals with their enemies, but never with their own heart.

Some want a political Jesus or a sissified Jesus or an Americanized version of Jesus or a liberal-leaning Jesus.

But Jesus doesn't fit into our expectation boxes, and if we hold our expectations boxes too tightly, then we won't be able to see who Jesus really is, and we will stumble over Him. *[pauseeee]*

So what is Jesus doing by ending his response to John this way?

He basically wants John to know, "Don't let doubt defeat you."

"Your experiences and expectations will all pull you to want to stumble over Me, but don't let it.

You are blessed if you trust in who I am," Jesus is showing John. *[pauseeee]*

So also, each of you, *don't let doubt defeat you. [pause]*

It's normal to have doubts from time-to-time, but will it defeat you?

Will you stumble? Will you be offended by Jesus?

Or will you be blessed because you trust in who He is and what He has done? *[pauseeee]*

That's the message that Christ has to the doubters: believe and don't stumble.

*But what about the unrepentant? We see next...*

## **II. A message for the unrepentant. (7-24)**

I'll READ verses 7-24. *[READ]*

Jesus uses John the Baptist to make a point about Himself.

He asks questions to get his listeners to think about who John is -- he is the messenger sent before the Messiah. *[pause]*

So if this is true, what's the implication?

Jesus is truly the One promised to come! *[pause]*

Christ talks this way because He wants the people to pick up on His significance and the significance of the dawning of a new age in Him.

If John is the One who goes right before the Messiah, then Jesus' arrival is big, and so they must "listen up".

That's why He says, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." *[pauseeee]*

Jesus calls the people to believe in Him and not reject Him, as so many others have.

For He shows the foolishness of rejection. *[pause]*

The people had been like children playing games.

They played the flute and the other kids didn't dance.

Then they sang a dirge and the other kids didn't mourn.

They are like children who are never satisfied.

They are like, "Come on, I wanted you to be sad, not happy. Now I want you to be happy, not sad. Play my game! Now play this game!"

And that's how they were with Jesus and John the Baptist.

They thought John the Baptist was too rigid with his lifestyle, and they thought that Jesus was too unrestrained. *[pause]*

They were inconsistent, unsatisfied, and unable to be pleased -- and they looked for excuses to disbelieve. *[pauseeee]*

You see, rejection of Christ isn't a new thing, but it's been happening since Christ came onto the scene.

This is why nowadays you will give so much evidence to someone, and they will find something about it that they disagree with.

It's because they don't want the truth, but want to live in rejection of Christ.

So the issue isn't a lack of evidence, but a lack of a softened heart. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus makes this clear in verses 20-24.

He denounces the cities where most of his mighty works were done, for they didn't repent. *[pause]*

He talks about how even Sodom would have repented if they had seen what these towns did.  
[pause]

That's a really startling statement, for Sodom was a horrific town, just remember what happened with the whole Lot situation.<sup>3</sup> [pause]

These towns had such clear revelation, for the Son of God had performed so many miracles in their midst, yet they still rejected Him. [pause]

**How could they do this?**

What was their root problem?

Look at verse 23, "And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven?" [pause]

Their pride was their biggest problem.

In pride, they didn't want to humble themselves and submit to Christ.

For pride blinded them from the truth that was right in front of their faces. [pauseeee]

**In pride, people think, "I don't need a Savior, I am enough in myself."**

Or, "I don't want my sin revealed, but I want to harbor it," so they close up their hearts to the Lord.

But woe to any of us who lives in rejection of Christ, especially when we have such clear revelation and knowledge of Jesus! [pauseeee]

The hardened heart will always come up with an excuse, it will never be pleased with the truth, and so what they need is God to work on their hearts!

May we pray that God's Spirit would soften their hearts to lower their pride. [pauseeeee]

If you have never trusted in Jesus Christ, I plead with you: repent today!

**Judgment is coming, if you don't repent and believe in Christ!**

Ask God to help you, and draw near to Christ -- He will save! [pauseeee]

And for us who believe, may we reflect upon any pride in our hearts, and root it out with fervor, knowing the wreckage that it can inflict. [pauseeee]

*So we heard a message for the doubters and unrepentant, but what's next?...*

### **III. A message for the humble and weary. (25-30)**

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<sup>3</sup> See Genesis 18:16-19:29.

Let's READ verses 25-30. *[READ]*

After hearing of so many people rejecting Christ, a question could arise...

Why is it that people could reject Christ with such clear evidence? *[pause]*

To give us the answer, Jesus transports us beyond this world, beyond a mere human perspective, to what's going on from the divine side of things. *[pauseeee]*

You see, if you looked at it from just a human standpoint, it doesn't make sense at all.

From a human standpoint, more evidence should always equal more belief, but that's not what happens in reality.

Instead, many people who have clear evidence reject Christ. *[pause]*

So then what's going on?

Christ thanks the Father for hiding the truth from the wise and yet revealing it to little children.

In fact, Jesus says that this is the Father's "gracious will". *[pauseeee]*

So how does someone come to know the saving truth?

God must reveal it to them. *[pause]*

You don't just know saving truth or find it in your own amazingness, but God must open your eyes to the wonders of salvation.

And the way that He reveals salvation is through Jesus Christ. *[pauseeee]*

This explains why so many of the people in Jesus' day saw so much evidence, but didn't believe.

It wasn't some flaw, it didn't catch Christ off guard, but the Lord was in control of it the whole time.

It was ultimately because God had chosen to conceal the truth from them in their pride. *[pauseeee]*

Truly knowing and trusting in the saving truth is never done by merit, for God has set it up to be received by grace.

Therefore, we are reliant upon our gracious Heavenly Father, who chooses to give gracious revelation to us. *[pauseeee]*

People only come to know Christ because He chooses to reveal Himself to them, and He does so with all those who are "childlike" and not prideful. *[pause]*

So what does this look like?



Jesus shows us as He says in verse 28, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” *[pause]*

The ones who are wise and understanding in their own eyes don’t go to Christ, and don’t think they need help.

But those who are like little children are those who know they are weary and burdened and go to Christ in their need.

And so it’s those who are weary and burdened who are invited to come. *[pause]*

So Christ doesn’t call the people who think they are wise and understanding in themselves.

He doesn’t call the people who think they don’t need Him.

He doesn’t call the people who think they are enough and worthy.

No, he calls all those who know they are not enough, who know they are not worthy, and who know they don’t have all the answers in themselves. *[pauseeee]*

They are weary and burdened, and know it.

They are not looking inwards to a solution, but outwards, as they come to Christ in all of their neediness and find rest. *[pauseeeee]*

Are you weary and burdened?

Go to Jesus and find rest! *[pause]*

He doesn’t say, “Come to me if you do a certain amount of good works first.”

He doesn’t say, “Come to me once you’ve got your life together, and then we’ll talk.”

No, the gracious invitation is to simply come and find rest in Him, and all that takes is a recognition that, “I am needy, and I need Christ.”

And that’s the posture of a little child, who the Father loves to shower grace upon. *[pauseeee]*

We simply come and we learn from Christ, where we find rest for our souls.

We find relief from the burden of guilt, the shackling slavery to sin, and the weight of self-striving.

We find that we don’t have a harsh, mean master, but we come and put on the easy, light yoke of a Master, who is “gentle and lowly in heart”. *[pauseeee]*

Serving Him is not painstaking drudgery, but joyous, as He gives us the strength to obey, and He’s kind to us all along the way.

Now that's rest, the rest that we can have in our souls, knowing that in Christ, we have a gentle and lowly Lord, who says, "Come and learn." *[pauseeee]*

Are you weary and burdened today?

Humbly go to Christ and find rest.

He will give you what you need for today.

And if you have never trusted in Him, lay down your pride and self-sufficiency, and go to Him, who is what your soul needs to find forgiveness, life, and rest. *[pauseeee]*

*Jesus is truly the promised One, but what will be your response?...*

**Will you remain in doubt, reject Him, or find rest in Him?**

You have some doubts? Don't let those doubts defeat you, but go back to Christ, and see Him in light of the Word of God.

Have you been rejecting Him? Humble yourself, and see who God says He is.

Go to Him, and find rest. *[pauseeee]*

Maybe you're here this morning and you've felt especially weary and burdened lately.

Even as Christians, we can sometimes start getting back into the mode of self-sufficiency.

We think about all that needs to be done to obey the Lord, and we start to rely upon ourselves once again.

We then feel crushed under the weight of it all, but Jesus wants to give you relief.

He is gentle and lowly.

He isn't ready to hit you over the head for failing, or yell in your face in disappointment.

No, He is ready with loving arms to embrace you as you run to Him, and to give you rest today. *[pause]*

Rely upon Him, rest in His love, His control, His righteousness, His empowering, and feel the burden get lighter.