

John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth and personally witnessed the Spirit descend on Jesus at his baptism, yet he still sent disciples to ask if Jesus was truly the Messiah -- what does his doubt reveal about the limits of spiritual experience alone in sustaining faith during seasons of suffering?

The sermon points out that Jesus spoke highly of John the Baptist immediately after John questioned his identity, rather than responding with offense -- how does Jesus modeling this kind of grace challenge the way you respond when someone you love or respect doubts or disappoints you?

Jesus said 'Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me,' suggesting that Christ himself can become a stumbling block to those whose expectations he does not meet -- in what ways might your own image of who Jesus should be actually be keeping you from knowing who he truly is?

John the Baptist separated himself from the world as an act of holiness, while Jesus ate and drank with sinners and tax collectors, and both were criticized for their approach -- how do you discern in your own life when separation from the world is faithfulness and when engagement with the world is witness?

The sermon suggests that our unmet expectations of God -- when he does not heal, deliver, or intervene the way we believe he should -- are one of the most common reasons people walk away from faith -- what spiritual practices or truths help you hold on to trust in God when your expectations go unmet?

Jesus never visited John in prison and, as far as the Gospels record, never performed a miracle to free him -- how does this challenge the idea that faithfulness to God guarantees his visible intervention in our circumstances, and what does it mean to remain faithful when God seems silent?

The pastor draws a distinction between judging others by your own standards versus asking God to give you his perspective on people -- how

would genuinely praying for God's kind of judgment toward others change the way you interact with people in your church, your neighborhood, or your family?

Paul's instruction in 1 Thessalonians to rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in all things is presented as a guard against bitterness and false expectation -- how does a consistent practice of gratitude and praise reshape the way you interpret difficult or disappointing circumstances?

The sermon observes that Satan is skilled at taking a thought and spinning it until it feels like truth, as happened with John the Baptist in prison -- can you identify a belief about God, yourself, or others that may have been shaped more by a season of pain or isolation than by scripture and truth?

John the Baptist died faithful to his convictions even while questioning whether Jesus was who he claimed to be -- what does his life and death suggest about the relationship between doubt and faithfulness, and how should the church create space for people who are wrestling honestly with both?