



“Disappointment”

Thawing

Courage Church, Detroit, MI

January 29, 2017

We are continuing our series on Thawing this morning... and we are going to take our first fruit offering today and leave it open through the week until next Sunday...

and when we get into the message, considering that it is First Fruit Sunday, some of you are going to think that I am absolutely crazy.

But the truth is, that I love you. All of you... and I take so seriously my role in this body... in this church... of teaching you the word of God and raising you up to be followers of Christ at any cost...

and I think that today's subject has really been a factor in people just subtly pulling further and further away from Jesus... It causes us to NOT give, when maybe we know that we should... it causes us to wonder... God... do you actually care? Because if YOU DON'T CARE, THEN WHY SHOULD I CARE? It causes the PIPES TO FREEZE!

And BECAUSE I LOVE YOU, my hope is that you view your life a little bit differently... in a more gospel centered way than you ever have before... when you leave this place today.

and I wanted to start today's message with a testimony of some friends who we all know... Matt and Chavonne, Dawn and I love you guys so much... we are so proud of you... we have been so honored to have walked through with you some of the things that you guys walked through last year, and it has just been amazing seeing what God has done through you since then... so I am going to give you guys the floor... tell us your story!

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Give them a hand as you open your bibles to Matthew chapter 11, verses 2-11

“Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ⁴ And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ 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. ⁶ And **blessed is the one who is not offended by me.**”

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. ⁹ What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is he of whom it is written,

“ ‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.’

¹¹ Truly, I say to you, **among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.** Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Let's Pray.

I want to ask you all a question... and don't answer it out loud, but I want you to ponder on it for a moment... think about it.

Are you disappointed?

Disappointed with where you are in life... Disappointed with where the world is in this moment? Disappointed in the church? Maybe you are disappointed in me, or in Dawn and I? Or in your family? Or your job? Or in the government?

“I was supposed to get the promotion...”

We were supposed to be out of debt by now...

we were supposed to own a house by now...

We were supposed to have two babies... there weren't supposed to be problems.

Dawn is pregnant, and we are so excited for our new baby that is due this summer... but LAST summer, we went through a miscarriage.

And so even though Dawn is pregnant now, the baby that we would have had would be due pretty soon... and for Dawn, it has felt like a never ending pregnancy since last summer, and she is really only one trimester in.

We weren't SUPPOSED to have a miscarriage.

Or God forbid, the wife who accidentally finds out that her husband is cheating on her when she picks up his phone thinking that it is hers, and discovers something that she had never imagined in all the time that they had been together, and suddenly she feels like she just lost the last eleven years of her life...

He were SUPPOSED to be faithful ALWAYS.

The more and more I talk to people the more that I get this sense that people are just *disappointed*.

They are disappointed in their fellow man... they are disappointed when they think about how hard they have worked and how little they feel like they have accomplished.

They are disappointed by how much they paid for school, and how little they get paid for work.

And so everything just feels like you are on treadmill. You are running as fast as you can but it doesn't feel like you are going anywhere. And finally

maybe you do get what you thought was going to be that HUGE BREAK... and you GET THAT JOB or you GET THAT PROMOTION and suddenly...

YOU DON'T FEEL ANY DIFFERENTLY.

and These thoughts are certainly NOTHING new.

Solomon, in Ecclesiastes 2 tells us that he had everything.. he had all the possessions, everything that his eye desired he went ahead and had... everything he wanted, he took, he denied himself of nothing... it was more and more and more...

And then the bible says this... Solomon writes "When I **considered**..." all that I had done... it was all useless... worthless... vain.

"Considered" is the Hebrew word פָּנָה "*panah*" and it means "cleared away"

It is like we talked about with busyness... we fill our lives up with things that feed us, but don't actually fill us... and in order to get past living a life like that, you have to create space... you have to clear away all of it, all of the stuff that is taking up space but not doing any good... you clear it, and take a real look at your life.

You will make the same mistakes over and over and over again if you never take the time to reflect on them, and understand why it is that you got the results that you got."

- So Solomon did the busyness thing... he did the striving thing... but when he finally cleared away all of the clutter and took the time to actually look at what his life had net him...

he was disappointed.

But at least Solomon could point it back on himself... he had life made... he had all money... he had all the wives... he even had all the wisdom... and he just spent it all doing stupid things.

Some of us can relate to that... I think everyone has been there to an extent... actually accomplishing a dream... getting to the mountaintop only to discover you have to climb back down.

Only to realize that once you accomplish one thing... there will always be another thing.

And there is that kind of disappointment... living that life of feeding but never filling... but I think A LOT MORE OF US can relate EVEN MORE to the disappointment that John the Baptist felt.

John the Baptist was not like Solomon. and I am warning you now... this is going to be very hard for some of you to hear. This is one of those moments where you go, "okay God, how do I reconcile THIS with MY life? and with my feelings? and the way that I THINK THINGS SHOULD BE?"

John the Baptist was the perfect picture of what a follower of Jesus should look like. He always pointed to Christ, never to himself.

John the Baptist took the Nazarite vow... which meant he didn't shave his face... He NEVER TOUCHED ALCOHOL his entire life. He lived off of the wild... Solomon lived in palaces, John lived in the wilderness. Off of nothing. He never asked anyone for anything, and he never took anything from anyone.

His entire purpose was to prepare the way for Jesus Christ, and he knew it.

He knew that everything about his life was about pointing people to Jesus... even his own disciples, when they had the chance, left John to follow Jesus because all John ever talked to them about was Jesus. Literally... Jesus walks up to John, and John makes his famous proclamation "Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!" and the bible says that John's followers right away left John, and followed Jesus! (John 1:35-37)

He was the one who Baptized Jesus, and he was a witness to the Holy Spirit descending down on Jesus in the bodily form like a dove, and a voice

from heaven saying “This is my son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)

Now, there was a King named Herod... and there were several generations of “King Herod’s” so this was not the same way that killed all of the babies under two when Jesus was born... That was Herod the Great. This was Herod Antipas.

King Herod was obviously is super powerful, but he was kind of a pervert... AND DEFINITELY A BIG JERK. (Mark 6:14-20)

Because the King had a brother that Mark’s gospel says was named Philip, and Philip had a wife... and through some sort of chain of events, Philip’s wife seised being Philips wife, and became the wife of Herod.

So he stole his brothers wife.

And John the Baptist said to Herod... THIS IS NOT OK. He boldly confronted the King and called him OUT.

Now, this is interesting, because if you go back and read this in Mark 6, it says that King Herod actually liked to hear John preach... it says that he was glad when John would talk, even though it always convicted him. So in one way, John the Baptist had favor with Herod.

But because John spoke out against the King, the King had him thrown in prison... but out of the respect that he had for John, he commanded that John be kept safe.

and that is where we find ourselves with the scripture that we read at the beginning. Focus here... because this is nuts when you realize everything that Jesus is saying here. We are going to read it all again but piece by piece this time, starting with verses 2- (Matthew 11) -

“Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or *shall we look for another?*”

This is the guy who once proclaimed that Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29) and now he is asking Jesus, “was this whole thing a sham? Should we keep looking? Did I pave the way for the wrong guy?”

John suddenly was feeling the weight of all that... Had he led everyone astray for a god who isn't actually powerful enough to rescue him from the prison?

Are you really the Messiah? Because I lived my life LIKE YOU ARE!

What a picture of our lives in those disappointing moments when it feels like God hasn't shown up...

I showed self control every chance I got! All my friends were out having a good old time and I didn't go because I wanted to live a life that was pleasing to you... and look at where it GOT ME!

really what John was asking Jesus was, “if you really are God, then what good did it do me to serve you my whole life only to end up here?”

or perhaps an even bigger question would be: “Are you going to rescue me, Jesus?”

John the Baptist found himself in a place that everybody at one time or another in their lives finds themselves in...

DOUBT.

Because anytime you give your entire life to something, you better first take the time to at least count the cost... and at least ask yourself “is this worth it?”

If you never asked that question then you really should ask it now...

Because the Christian life is not all butterflies flying over flowers on a Sunny Spring morning while birds chirp in the background...

you are going to try and do one thing, and SOMETIMES it is going to go another way. You are going to have dreams, and YOU SHOULD DREAM DREAMS... that is so important... but those dreams will lead you on a journey... and the end result doesn't always look the way that you saw it first in your mind because somewhere along the way, something goes another direction. Someone lets you down, you get injured, hurt... deserted...

Pastor Matthew, the Pastor of the Dream Center in Los Angeles, this week embarked on the biggest challenge of his life. The Dream Center is a 400 thousand square foot hospital for hurting people that is fully funded by the generosity of donors... and it costs millions and millions of dollars to keep it running, so he often has to go out and fundraise for it.

In an effort to raise a HUGE chunk of money, and hopefully run the Dream Center for years to come... this week he has been taking part in "The World Marathon Challenge." He has been training for it and talking about it and raising money for it for years leading up to this week... and what he has been doing all week, is he is running:

7 Marathons
in 7 straight Days
on 7 continents.

They started on Antartica, then went to Chili, Miami, Spain, Morocco, Dubai, and then they are ending today in Sydney, Australia.

And he went in with some amazing goals... I don't know exactly what they all were, but he was getting close to running these marathons in a little over 4 hours a piece... but on the 3rd mile marker of the 4th Marathon, I believe they were in Spain, his knee blew out. He finished that race, obviously slower, and then it was announced that his IT Band was destroyed.

He finished the race.

The next day, he posted a video from his 5th Marathon... In Morocco. On the video, this is what he said... and he is saying all of this as he is basically limping through this 5th Marathon...

He said: My KNEE is SHATTERED. But I am not going to quite... I am going to push through and finish all seven of these things, and then I will get surgery later.

Then he said this:

“I will not finish any marathon over 6 hours, but the goals HAVE CHANGED. Sometimes in life you get injured or something happens, and the goals have got to change... BUT you still set high goals.”

Now, that may sound simple, and kind of whatever coming from me on a stage on 8 hours of sleep... but he said it in the middle of running his 5th Marathon in 5 days on five different continents with a destroyed IT Band.

On the 6th race, he said he had to do the Frankenstein walk... and he finished barely under the 8 hour limit. He kept adjusting... BUT HE KEPT GOING!

This morning he posted that he was meeting with a team of people and working on a strategy for how he would even finish the 7th race in under the 8 hour limit. I believe he is running that last race right now.

and truthfully...IF YOU ARE THE ONE RUNNING, it can be easy to think: Yeah, but your goal was 4. You have to be pretty heartless to actually believe that about SOMEONE ELSE -- but when you set personal goals and then circumstances force them to change, it is SO EASY to let that destroy you and destroy your dreams.

MOST PEOPLE that I know, when they try something hard (IF THEY EVEN TRY), like run a marathon... and then they blow out their knee or they destroy their IT band...

They count it as a loss, and they stop running. And they are disappointed. And they begin to think “all that training was a waste... all that time spent was a waste...”

Because they hit a point where they are debilitated.

And John the Baptist was at that point. Everything had turned on him. Everything was out of his control.

He was in a prison cell...

and now, the same man who was once so bold as to call the KING out on account of His sinful marriage didn't even know what he believed anymore.

Are you it Jesus?

Because everything I ever did for you landed me here.

Now look at Jesus' response, verse 4-6.

And Jesus answered them, "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. And **blessed is the one who is not offended by me.**"

and a lot of people struggle with Jesus' response to John, because they think that Jesus doesn't answer John's question.

They think that Jesus is just saying "tell John that good things are happening out here." But actually Jesus is saying something much, much, much bigger than that.

Watch what Jesus does.

He quotes a very famous passage of scripture... found in Isaiah. Jews considered it to be "the Messianic Promise" - Jesus uses this passage a couple of different times in scripture, partly because everybody knew that scripture, and partly because a LOT of that scripture, he fulfilled during his earthly ministry, his life, and his eventual death.

and every time that Jesus uses it, he uses it very strategically.

What he does is he quotes these promises that everyone knows in Isaiah, but when he sends this message to John, there are two parts that he leaves out: It is found in Isaiah 61

to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

and replaces it with: “blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

This is what that means. And again, its a hard pill to swallow, but its so crucial to understanding the gospel:

Jesus tells John... John you paved the way. You changed the world... you primed them for my coming... you baptized me...

and it is happening! People are getting healed. The lame are walking, the lepers are cleansed, the blind see, and GOOD NEWS IS BEING PREACHED TO THE POOR.

But the prison doors are not going to open for you.

ITS ALL HAPPENING! It is just not happening exactly the way that *you* thought that it would.

Don't be offended John... but you are not getting the answer that you were looking for.

John the Baptist probably thought that he would be Jesus' right hand man in the restoration of all things... somewhere in his mind, even though he lived this totally self-less life... he probably thought... “Yes... but it is going to come around FOR ME...” and when it didn't, he wondered if it was real at all.

Because that is what disappoint does to a person.

We can't see past ourselves... and so we have such a hard time realizing that all the little things that we do... they all play a role. Sometimes we plant seeds that we get the opportunity to harvest...

and sometimes we plant seeds that we never see the fruit of.

I heard a story recently about a group of Indians who had all of this land, and they spent all of this time planting seeds and scattering them throughout the land... and the seeds were for these trees that would take 50-60 years or more to grow into what they would one day be...

and when someone asked them, "why are you using all of your land to plant seeds?" YOU WILL NEVER SEE WHAT THEY WILL BECOME!

One of them said "we are doing this, so that 100 years from now, our childrens childrens children will all have more than enough wood in the village to build everyone in our tribe a home." Nobody will be homeless, THEN.

They will NEVER SEE IT!

But they planted what would later become a city.

Some experts say that all the people who are working so hard to make Detroit amazing... that it will be a whole generation later that will actually enjoy the fruits of that... and truthfully, when I heard that, I was a little disappointed! Of course, it made me want to prove them wrong... and hopefully we CAN! but something in us wants to work for a change that we get to benefit from too...

and I am not saying that NOTHING that we do will have immediate results that we can see and feel and celebrate... I believe we will have those moments and I have been a part of a lot of those moments with many of you all already... but I am saying that EVERYTHING that we do is BIGGER than just us.

and that is what Jesus was trying to show John in this moment of extreme disappointment.

But John wasn't seeing that... He was seeing his tight living quarters in a cold prison cell... he saw a hopeless circumstance and Jesus was telling John...

no no no... don't look at life from the view of the prison wall that you have...

see beyond it. You are seeing this (this tiny perspective of the way that the gospel has lead you somewhere that you don't want to go)

But John... close your eyes for a moment, and SEE THIS! A bigger picture that you were a part of... that you planted seeds for. That are being harvested now... The blind see... the good news is moving forward!

Circumstances have this way of clouding our view of what is actually going on.

I think about Courage Church... and all of the steps that we believe that God has laid out for us to take in order to make the biggest impact we possibly can on this city... to love it well... and we took step one, and we took step two... and we did this First Fruit Offering last year to launch our discipleship school AND we launched it!

and we raised enough money to possibly get a house... it may be a project, but it would get us going...

AND every single time that we put in offers we get outbid by people who have more money than us, or something comes up that makes it so that deal doesn't work out and every single time, man, I get so disappointed... Because I put so much hope and faith in the THINGS THAT I SEE... but God is just trying to show me more and more what he showed John... If it were me in that prison, it would have went something like this:

Jacob... people are getting saved... people are being healed... people are being helped, who lived the last ten years of their lives thinking that help doesn't even exist and now look at them.

Jacob... the church is advancing. and doors are opening. and people are being baptized... I am still on the THRONE.

and “blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

and I just sort of hear God subtly saying to me: I know that it is not happening *exactly* the way that you saw it happening in your mind or in exactly the time frame that you wanted it to happen... BUT THAT VISION is leading you somewhere... and it is keeping you going...

It is just like with Pastor Matthew... he says “WHAT IS KEEPING ME RUNNING?” It is the cause of Christ being lived out in a practical way at the Los Angeles Dream Center...

He says “I am running, so that people don’t have to run anymore.”

But how easily he could have said “GOD! If you are in this, THEN WHY DID MY KNEES GIVE OUT?”

God... IF YOU ARE IN THIS... then why do I have to RESET ALL OF MY GOALS... I am only trying to help people!

LIFE
ALMOST
NEVER
GOES
THE
WAY
WE
PLAN.

and when John would have heard that message... he would have known exactly what Jesus was saying to him... and that is why Jesus replaced those key words about the prison being opened, with these words:

“blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

How many times in our lives do we get offended, because things don’t go our way... and it is easy to think that we are offended by a person, or we are offended by an ideal...

but at the core of our being, it makes us question God... God... How could you LET this happen?

How could you LET that person do that?

How could you LET that happen to them? Or to ME?

Why would you let me serve you for my entire life and nowhere along the journey does it ever feel like it is actually going to PAY OFF?

God I gave up everything for you.

That is what disappointment does in us if it is not properly dealt with. That is why we need to thaw of it... because we spend all this time reminding ourselves that God has our back, and he holds the whole world in his hands... and yet when our worlds seem to fall apart, we look for someone to blame... and even though most of us would not say we blame God... if we harbor disappoint for long enough, the only one that will be left to blame is the one who we believe holds it all together.

and it is not that He is NOT holding it together... it is bigger than that.

God is holding THE WHOLE THING together, not *just* your thing or my thing.

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Please hear me... because I am not saying that God does not care about the littlest details of your life, he does... he knows the number of hairs on your head! (Luke 12:7)

BUT The church and its mission has always been about a body moving forward together. Peter puts like like this (1 Peter 2:5) "we are like living stones being built up together to form a spiritual house."

The things in our hearts that we want to accomplish, we will never do on our own... but every step we take toward those dreams is progress for the entire Kingdom of God.

EVEN IN THE MOMENTS when our story doesn't turn out the way that we thought that it would.

That was John. Nobody lived a more radical life of devotion and of DISCIPLINE than John the Baptist, and this is what happened to him:

Herodias, the wife of Herod, hated John the Baptist...

and on Herod's birthday... Herodias's daughter (from another husband) - danced before Herod and his company... and again, another reason I say he was so perverted... this would have been like Herod's step daughter... and I guess technically his wife used to be married to his brother, so assuming the daughter was from THAT marriage, it would also make this girl Herod's niece (they don't teach you this stuff in Sunday School!)

and she dances for him... and Herod thought that the whole thing was so good, that he told this girl... "Up to half of my kingdom... ask me for anything, and it is YOURS!"

Over a dance.

and her mother, Herodias, tells her to tell Herod "I want the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter." (Matt. 14:8)

and because Herod had made the oath in front of all of his guests, the bible says that he was sorry to do it, but he granted her request.

And that is how John the Baptist's life ended.

Now, knowing all of that... Look at what Jesus does. After getting the message from the one man that would likely have been described as Jesus' most loyal servant... after hearing those words and realizing that EVEN THE BEST have doubts... and even the BEST are human... and even the BEST live their lives on a timeline that one day RUNS OUT... Jesus tells John... don't be offended... the gospel moves forward through what you have done... then he says this to his listeners (this is incredible, and there are so many takeaways here):

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. ⁹ What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is he of whom it is written,

“ ‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.’

¹¹ Truly, I say to you, **among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.** Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

After hearing John’s message of doubt... of questioning Jesus... Jesus turned around, stood before the crowd and said “That guy is as good as it gets in THIS WORLD.”

He is it.

Of every person born of a woman, there is no one greater than the man who just doubted me. Jesus wasn’t taken back by John’s doubts.

Jesus loved John the Baptist.

He let John Baptize Him!

and the fact that John’s life did not turn out the way that JOHN thought that it would, was not a reflection of how much God loved John. Jesus literally says “There is no-one greater than John.”

That sounds an awful lot like Jesus saying “I am proud of John!” I am proud of that doubting, baptizing prisoner who gave his life only to lose it.

and this is why thawing of our disappointment is SO incredibly crucial if we are going to make a difference in our world, and if we are going to live a life that actually CHANGES peoples lives.

This is how we think as Christians, and it is wrong...

We think: If God is FOR me...
Then God will do THIS FOR ME.

whatever *this* may be.

But there is no gospel in that.

God has an end goal... it is the redemption of humanity. It is the renewal of all things... it is the reconciliation of people BACK TO GOD...

and if we keep looking to our circumstances as our gage for whether or NOT God is actually moving, then we run the risk of spending our whole lives disappointed.

Because we view our lives temporally... and everything Jesus came to do is eternal.

That is why on Palm Sunday (Matt. 21) the people shouted "Hosanna in the highest!" During Jesus Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem... They championed him, and they paraded for him... They even called Him "The Son of David" which meant they all believed that he was the Messiah.

and only a few days later many of those same people were screaming "Crucify Him."

Because Jesus didn't come to overcome the Roman government in that moment... He came to restore humanity forever...

But the moment that the people realized "this guy is not going to change our CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES RIGHT HERE AND RIGHT NOW" they all started screaming TREASON!

Because circumstances cloud the bigger picture. They always have, and they always WILL.

That is why Paul, who himself was stoned, beaten almost to death on multiple occasions, and imprisoned, says in 2 Corinthians 4:18 -

“we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

The things that we can see are here today, and gone tomorrow. But there is always a bigger picture. And that is why Paul, just a couple of verses before that, says “So we don’t lose heart.”

because the world is broken... and its looking to break people... and if your happiness is based on a gage of how loving our world is acting toward you at any given moment, then I promise you, you are going to live a very disappointed life.

Live for others! Not for their approval... but for their humanity. For their well-being. For their salvation.

and When people let you down... keep living FOR THEM. Keep serving them. Keep showing people what Jesus looks like.

There is only one thing that I know of, that the bible specifically says DOES NOT DISAPPOINT. and that is Hope.

Romans 5:5 (NKJV)... “hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

and Christians are the only ones who know that hope, WHICH MEANS that we are the only ones that can spread that hope, in the midst of a world that has disappointed a whole lot of people.

The only thing that will start to make the world better is LOVE and the only thing that can truly CHANGE IT is the LOVE OF JESUS who laid his life DOWN so that this sinful world could be restored.

and people are mean... and they are going to keep on hurting each other, and it will disappoint you!

The church needs to work to LOVE. Love needs to be the loudest voice in the room every single time... The world takes, and it will keep on taking...

but the churches response to the world should ALWAYS BE THE OPPOSITE:

It is my life FOR YOURS... not your life for mine.

That is the gospel. and the moment that we value OUR lives over other's lives, we have LOST THE GOSPEL!

but if you live your life *that way* (for others), then you will NEVER be disappointed... because you aren't loving people for what you can get from them... you aren't finding your worth in the return, you are finding it in the gospel.

The gospel says that if you end up in prison for speaking the truth, and Herodias calls for your head on a silver platter....

God still loves you. And you ARE BLESSED! Remember what Jesus said... THERE WAS NOBODY GREATER THAN JOHN.

But John died a martyr.

But is that really what John is known for? How he died?

No.

We all know *that* story, but its not THE STORY.

John the Baptist is the one who paved the way for Jesus Christ.
John the Baptist is the one who declared that Jesus is the lamb of God.
John the Baptist is the one raised up disciples in order that THEY would leave everything, and follow Jesus.
John the Baptist was the greatest example of what it means to live a life completely devoted to Jesus Christ.

His legacy of sacrifice is the greatest testimony to his life on this earth. and its pretty hard to say otherwise, because even AFTER Jesus saw the way that John's disappointment lead him to doubt, he still said "this guy is as a good as gets on this earth."

We are taking our first fruit offering today... and the whole concept of the first fruit offering is really not a very glamorous one... the principle behind it is giving out of uncertainty... giving the BIKKIRUM (**the part of the harvest that ripened and came forth before the rest of the harvest did**)...

Giving the first NOT KNOWING what the rest of the harvest is going to look like..

and I pray that this is the best year of your life. I do. I speak that.

I pray that this year our nation finds the healing that it so desperately needs, and only comes in Jesus. I believe with all of my heart that all of our best days ARE AHEAD OF US...

but please hear this: Blessed is one, who IN THE YEAR THAT the harvest doesn't turn out as well as you thought it would when you gave your bikkirum... IS NOT OFFENDED BY ME."

Blessed are Matt and Chavonne, who, maybe last year didn't go exactly the way that they had planned on it going when they first planted that seed... but they are not offended by Jesus. They still trust. They still have hope. and HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT.

AND I KNOW MOST OF YOU PROBABLY THINK THAT I AM CRAZY, to to on a day where we are asking people to give a first fruit offering, to talk about disappointment... but I did it on purpose. And I know its an "out there" approach, but I am not trying to manipulate ANYONE into doing anything, I asked you to pray, "God, what would YOU have me to give, and then give that" -

I can't stand up here and say that you are or are not going to get it all back and more this year...

you may. My prayer is that you do!

But when I look around at our world, and I see what is happening... I think that something bigger is happening than even any of us can see.

My objective in giving THAT message to LEAD to THIS moment, is to tell you this: You will, in this life, plant seeds... **SOME OF WHICH YOU WILL NOT** harvest. You will plant trees so that future generations can build houses.

In this life, some of you may be SO BLESSED.

Some of you will give your first fruit, the bikkirum.... and your harvest MAY be 100 fold...

but 100 fold is not the blessing. The blessing IS the gift.

The blessing IS the seed.

The blessing IS THE ROLE that you get to play in the Kingdom of God.

True BLESSING comes from seeing a bigger picture, than just the jail cell you feel stuck in in the moment. Whatever that may look like for you.

God is on the move, and he is moving through his people.

So I am going to say a prayer, a blessing over all of you, and over our bikkirum, and over our church, our city and our nation.

and I know a lot of you will give on the website, and on our mobile app and with pushpay, or in the back with square...

and we will sing one last song and during this time the altars are open... we encourage you to come up, lay your offering before the Lord, or just come up and spend some time with Jesus.

The world is a disappointing place, and the church is meant to be a refuge.

So find refuge in Jesus this morning.