

The Silence of Jesus Matthew 11

We all know the question: “Why, God?” A terrible tragedy in our lives. A struggle with temptation. A battle for understanding. We ask God for answers. Why do we suffer? Why did this or that happen? Why does God not answer? Perhaps a few moments in the life of our Lord can give us some understanding to how God does answer us in moments of struggle.

In Matthew chapter 11, we see an unusual exchange between Jesus and the disciples of John the Baptist. As John sits in prison, he sends his disciples to ask Jesus if He is indeed the Messiah. It is unusual, as John himself was the one who identified Jesus as such in John 1:36, and saw God Himself proclaim Jesus His Son in Matthew 3:17.

What is more unusual is that Jesus takes a moment to tell His disciples that John is not a mere man, but the greatest man who ever lived (aside from Himself). John was fearless in confronting the leaders of his day in their sin, whether it be the Pharisees and priests in Matthew 3, or the Roman leaders in Matthew 14. We can conclude that anyone can have a moment of question or doubt; John faces death, and wants one more assurance. What is most unusual is the manner Jesus answers John’s inquiry: not a yes or no, but to think about what you already know.

Jesus told John to consider what he already had seen and known. Could Jesus’ answer have contained more power than the vision John saw at Jesus’ baptism? Could the answer of the moment be greater than the prophetic predictions of the identity of the Messiah? No, in fact, by directing John to what was known, Jesus gave him a more certain answer. The point of our lesson is that when we seek an answer from God to the events or struggles in our lives, the directive to seek the answer from the Scriptures is a more confident one than we could imagine.

II Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that all Scripture is inspired by God; it can be used for a Godly person (Paul said a spiritual person in I Corinthians 1) to thoroughly equip them for every good work. Do we struggle with temptations? I Corinthians 10:13 says we can overcome. Do we seek a reason for suffering? There is purpose in trial according to II Corinthians 12:9. Perhaps we ask “will this ever end”? Yes, according to James 1:7. The answer to all of our struggles has already been spoken, and we need to take a mind to the scriptures to believe that to be true in order for the effect to give us comfort.

This is not merely about our personal lives. We need to have the confidence to believe that God has spoken through the Word of God in all things. Do we question the effectiveness of the Gospel? God has spoken to this. Do we consider engaging the church at another level, to make it more effective in our discernment? God has spoken on this. The Apostles understood this when faced with the great crisis of Acts 15; they did not petition God for another answer, but looked to commands, examples and made inferences from what God had said.

We live in a world where many cannot discern between Faith and Mysticism. Mysticism seeks spiritual understanding through experiences, feelings, and the minds of men. Faith seeks understanding through the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Jesus made it clear we would be called to believe what we do not see, and believing we would be blessed (John 20:26-31). Today, what is written is all we need.

The events in Matthew 11 teach us that Jesus is merciful in our weakness; His answer was kind, not hurtful, to John’s moment of weakness. Matthew 11 teaches us that when we are undergoing trials, the answer is ready. Matthew 11 teaches us that when we commit ourselves to His service, the means and methods have been delivered once for all (Jude 3). Real Faith relies on what has already been spoken.