

The wobble moment

Matthew 11.2-11

John the Baptist sends his disciples to ask whether Jesus really is the promised Messiah. Jesus invites John to look at his words and deeds – they fulfil Isaiah's prophecies; and he affirms John as the messenger, foretold by Malachi, sent to prepare the way.

Now read **Matthew 11.2-11** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

This week, we flash forward from the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist to find John in Herod's dungeon and doubting whether Jesus is the promised Messiah. How does John deal with those doubts? How do we deal with our doubts?

#ADVENT

Each week during Advent, right up to Christmas, we focus on one of the names given to Jesus, what it means and how it might connect with your daily life. You will need the Advent tree you prepared in the first Advent week, and have added to since.

This week, take a gift tag and write on it 'Redeemer'. Attach the tag to the tree. Research this name (e.g. on the internet, using books, or by talking with others) – what does redeemer mean? Its original meaning is connected with slavery, but what does it mean in practical terms now? How might the answer to that connect with your life? How does it feel to know Jesus is your redeemer?



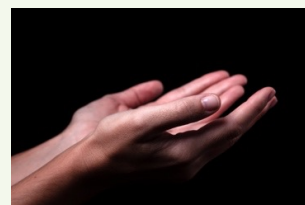
WIBBLE, WOBBLE

Make a jelly in a bowl or jelly mould. When the jelly has something strong around it, it stays solid. Turn it out of the mould and give a gentle wobble. Without the security of the mould it is wobbly. As you eat it, think or chat about what might help you in times of doubt – talking with friends, reading the Bible, praying, remembering that God is our strength and help in times of need.

Pray



Uncertainty can bring about many different feelings including doubt. We have been through times of great uncertainty in recent years. Thinking of yourself and those you know who may have doubts and questions, reflect on the image here. What would you like to lift to God today? Talk about them with God – that is what prayer is!



I DOUBT IT!

Discuss which of these statements you doubt or believe (answers below): 'Dolphins sleep with their eyes open.' 'There are waterfalls under the ocean.' 'Everyone loves sprouts.' 'Shadows are darker on the moon than on earth.'

How easy do you find it to trust in what you can't see? In the Bible, many people doubt and question, so we are not alone when we face these! How might you be encouraged to trust God when you have doubts? Find **Deuteronomy 31, verse 8** in your Bible. Read and copy out the words onto a slip of paper; keep the paper close by for times of doubt.

(Answers: True, true, false, true.)

SOLVE

The letters in the following words have got mixed up; can you work out the phrase: **tstru ni eht dolr thiw lal ruyo rehat**. If you get completely stuck, find the answer in your Bible: **Proverbs 3, verse 5**. Find out what the rest of the verse say, and the next one too. You could write these onto a strip of card and decorate it to make a useful bookmark.

STAND STRONG

Stand on one foot. How steady are you? Close your eyes, does that make it harder to balance? Swap to the other leg. Is that harder? Try a challenge with others to see who is the most steady. Discuss or think about the things in your life that can make you doubt or feel wobbly. Write them down, talk about them with God. Sometimes naming the things can be helpful to understanding them.

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

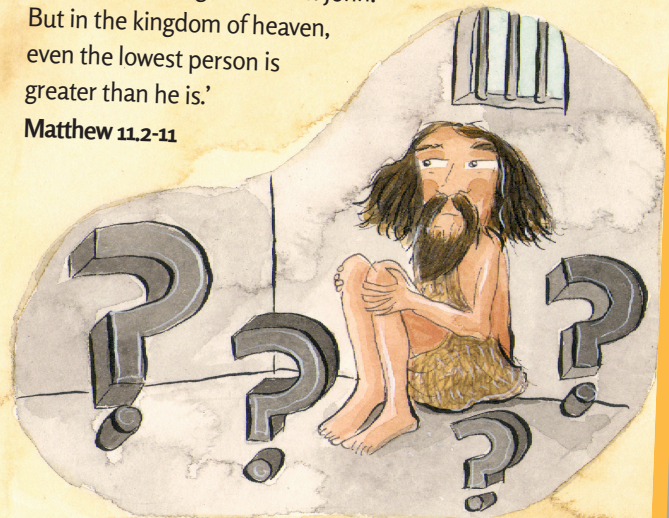
Although he had been thrown into prison, John the Baptist heard about the amazing things Jesus was doing. John sent his followers to Jesus with a question: 'Are you the one we've been waiting for, or should we wait for someone else?' He asked this because he wanted to know whether Jesus was the Messiah, whom God had promised to send, hundreds of years before.

Jesus replied, 'Tell John what you hear and see: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead return to life and the poor are given good news. Tell him that anyone who accepts me is blessed by God.'

John's followers went away and Jesus spoke to the crowds: 'When you went to see John in the desert, what did you go to see? Someone who changes their mind like a reed shaken by the wind? No? What, then? Someone dressed like a prince? You need to go to palaces to see people dressed up in soft clothes. What did you go to see? A prophet? Yes, that's who you went to see.'

'And what's more,' Jesus said, 'John isn't just any prophet. Isaiah wrote about him in the Old Testament. Isaiah said, "I am sending a messenger ahead of you, who will prepare the way for you." Truly I tell you,' said Jesus, 'there is not one person on earth greater than John. But in the kingdom of heaven, even the lowest person is greater than he is.'

Matthew 11.2-11



Did you know?

- John has told everyone that Jesus is God's promised one, the Messiah, but now he is doubting and wondering if this is true.
- The lame were people who couldn't walk, lepers were people with an infectious skin disease called leprosy.

Matthew 11.2-11 (NRSV)

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at?

A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."

Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.