

ADVENT 3

YEAR B

ISAIAH 61:1-4, 8-11

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-24

JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

DECEMBER 16, 17, 2017

There was great expectation among the people as John came out of the wilderness. He came out of the wilderness proclaiming a message of repentance. His message was the testimony about the one that was coming after him. John's testimony says that the one coming is greater than John. John is not even worthy to do untie the sandal of the one that is coming. You and I know that the witness John gives is the witness and testimony of the word that became flesh and lived among us. We know that he is talking about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the one that was coming into the world. Because there was that great expectation people wanted to know more about John. They asked an important question, "Who are you?" Some gathered were genuinely interested in the message of John. They wanted to have a new and better life than the one they were living. The Jewish leaders wanted to know because they were afraid of a new teaching. Maybe they wanted to be the first to see a prophet who brought a new message. Their presence at the place John was baptizing was mostly a suspicious presence.

John 1:19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

The question, "Who are you?" is an important question. In the church when we are inviting people to join us or to follow our teaching they need to know who we are and what we stand for. They need to know that what we are teaching and preaching is from the word of God and is a good and Godly interpretation of the word of God. They need to know that our ministry is based in the scriptures and that we are led by the Holy Spirit. How do I know if a certain preacher is worth listening to? How do you decide whether I am preaching a message that is the truth according to

God's word? We ask the important questions. "Who is at the center of the preaching? Is the preacher helping me to know that Jesus is Lord or is the primary purpose to promote themselves? Does the preacher give glory to God?"

John 1:25-27 They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal."

John the Baptist might be more appropriately called John the Witness. He sought to point the way to Jesus and to give glory to God. Those sent by the Pharisees asked John to identify himself. John started by saying what he was not. He is not the Messiah. He is neither Elijah nor the prophet. John could have easily lifted himself up. He could have sought his own glory and his own honor. There were many that came before John claiming to be Messiah. John claimed to be lower than a servant, unworthy to untie the sandals of Jesus. John did not claim any greatness for himself. He sought to give glory to God. John had a job to do. His job was not to save anyone. His job was to baptize with water. His job was to proclaim the truth about repentance and forgiveness. John's purpose was to be the voice of a prophet telling the people to make straight the way of the Lord. John's purpose in this witness was to allow the Lord to come near to the people because the Lord would be coming.

We are in the middle of the season of Advent. Many are anticipating the coming of the Lord. Many are saying that the time is near. I know the Lord is coming. I expect that he will come at a time I would never expect it. Jesus said that only the Father in heaven knows the time. It is not that important for me to know the time that has been set by the Father. We get preoccupied with this sign or that sign but it is far more important for me to be prepared whenever. I know he will come when I least expect him. As

a servant of the Lord I will give glory to God in all that I do. I do not claim any special preaching ability or any teaching ability. It is the Lord that gives inspiration. I do not claim special knowledge or a special place. I claim Jesus as Lord and God as Father and I claim the power of the Holy Spirit that gives inspiration and healing and instruction.

God gets the glory and God gets the honor. We gather in this place for worship. You do not worship the furniture or the candles or the microphones. You do not worship the windows, the preacher or the cross. You worship the one that was placed on that cross because he was the one that rose again and gives us life. Jesus gets the glory because without Jesus Christ there is no church and there is no forgiveness of sins and there is no life in us.

John came out of the wilderness preceding the Savior of the world. By what authority did John baptize and give witness? He baptized by the authority given by God. He baptized and preached repentance for the forgiveness of sins by the authority and the power given by the Holy Spirit. You and I are also sent by God to baptize, to share the body and blood of Christ at the communion table and to proclaim the forgiveness of sins. John came by authority of God. You and I have the same authority given to us. Jesus is the light that was coming into the world. Many were expecting him but few expected the Light of the world would be Jesus. You and I know the truth about our Messiah. We know that Jesus is the Christ. He is the word that became flesh and lived among us. John points the way to the one coming after him that was before him. He gives testimony to the one whose sandal he is not worthy to untie.

You and I are called to give the same testimony as John. We point others to Jesus Christ. We do not seek our own importance but we seek to give glory to God. Give glory to God in all things. AMEN