

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John 1:6-8,19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 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.” This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Sermon

In the tradition of the Church calendar, the 3rd Sunday in Advent is often called Rose Sunday. Rose Sunday represents a lightening of the dark violet of the rest of the penitential season of Advent. This lightening is important in two ways, first, it signifies the greater light shining through the violet to reveal the rose tint signifying the coming of the light, and second, it is the lightening of the mood, giving this Sunday a quality of joy. So today marks the half way point in Advent and it gives us a little break from the solemn nature of the season so we may evaluate where we are in preparation for the birth of Jesus. It is a time for us to emerge and see the light of the coming Lord.

Today's message is: We are witnesses to the light and the light is Jesus.

John the Baptist's whole mission is to emphasize the importance of Jesus and not his own. This is a major characteristic of Jesus' teaching that we learn from John—to be humble. Last week we heard how he wore camel hair and ate locusts and honey. This week we meet a whole different John. He was not that Prophet whom Moses said the Lord would raise from their own people. He was not the prophet they expected. He must have disappointed the people in his community who had venerated him or perhaps even worshipped him as the Messiah. But John the Baptist knew he stood in the sidelines.

There is a lot of literature on the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus. The Biblical text says that John is part of Jesus's extended family, perhaps a cousin. Some say that Jesus was part of John the Baptist's movement. Others argue that there may have been some rivalry. Questions arose on who was John the Baptist and why was he baptizing? We may never be able to answer these questions. But we do know that Jesus was positive about John the Baptist and we see John as a the model witness to the mission of Jesus. John is clear about his call, his identity, and his mission. He is a voice for the voiceless and he points us to Jesus.

John knows who he is and who he is not. He speaks the truth, but is not the truth, he is bright, but he is not the light, he is the voice crying in the wilderness, but he is not the Word of God.

Remember, like John, we are the witnesses to the light, and the light is Jesus.

So what does it mean to be witnesses of light
Maybe we can model John's ministry in our lives so that others might believe through us. But, how? We can start by telling others about this wonderful Good Samaritan community. We could talk about the difference faith makes in our lives.

Maybe once in awhile, in our secular life, we can mention “God” and what he means to us. But if you’re not quite ready for that, you might want to let people know who you are by the way you live your lives and the way you treat others. In other words, if you’re not comfortable preaching the gospel, you can simply live it. We can all witness to the light and we can do it as we carry out our day-to-day activities.

Little can be done in life just on our own, we all need the cooperation of others. John the Baptist knew there was little he could do himself. John was the voice of hope. Think about all the difficult times in your life, the death of a loved one, an illness, conflict with co-workers or family members, financial burdens, the sin that separated you from God, others, and yourself.

Answers and explanations did not help. How, what, when, or why was not what you wanted to hear. It was hope that got you through it all. Hope doesn't make your life easier, but it makes it possible. Hope reminds us that it won't always be like this. Hope is not easy. We must practice. It means we rejoice always, pray, and give thanks in everything. Hope is not a feeling, but an attitude in our life. It is a way of seeing. There is light and life coming to us.

Hope reminds us that there is a light, and the light is Jesus.

Amen