

Does Christmas Point You to Jesus?

Services: Sunday, 12/17 at 8:00 & 10:45

Church Year: Third Sunday in Advent – 2017

During Advent: Wednesday Services at 11 & 7; Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: In today's gospel reading from John chapter 1, we will see several ways in which John, *the one sent from God*, pointed people to Jesus.

John was important, *but not of himself*; John was important *ONLY because He pointed people to Jesus!* In a similar way, Christmas is important, *but not of itself*; it is important *ONLY because it points people to the Christ!*

Today, *as we see John keep pointing others to Jesus*, may our Christmas *preparations and celebrations* keep pointing us and others to Jesus – *the Christ of Christmas!*

1. **Sent from God to Prepare the Way:** ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. // The Bible does record God calling various people to serve – *like prophets and apostles*, but the phrase, “sent from God,” is used *ONLY TWICE* in the Bible. First, when God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary; second, when God sent John to tell others about Jesus. And for what purpose?

So “that all might believe [in Jesus] through [the testifying of John].” Dr. Kretzmann noted: “Through the Word, by faith, Christ is received.” Therefore, as we love others and want them to receive the Christ, let us be like John and share God’s Word with them!

2. **John’s Identity:** ¹⁹ **And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests** [*ordained descendants of Aaron*] **and Levites** [*non-ordained descendants of Levi*] **from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”** // Think about John – how Gabriel was sent to Zechariah, how Elizabeth conceived John in her old age, how John’s clothing and food were unusual, and how many people came to hear John and be baptized. So *the Pharisees sent certain priests and Levites to investigate!*
 - a. Who John is not:
 - i. ²⁰ **He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”** // John did not hesitate, *but quickly dismissed the idea of he himself being the Christ!*
 - ii. ²¹ **And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.”** // John came in the power and spirit of Elijah, *but he was not the Elijah of the OT!*
 - iii. **“Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”** // What did they mean by “the Prophet”? Moses had previously said to the people: “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me... from your brothers...” (Deut. 18:15 ESV). Even though those leaders were unaware,

the promised Prophet and the promised Messiah both refer to Jesus!

b. **Who John is:** ²² So they said to him, “Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” ²³ 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.” // Since John had said, “No” to every question, they asked him a more open-ended question, “What do you say about yourself?” John answered by quoting the prophecy about himself, *as recorded in Isaiah 40*, “Make straight the way of the Lord”; in other words, John was sent to call people to repent – to ✦acknowledge their sins, ✦be sorry, and ✦trust in the coming Messiah! That same message is so important today; *those who are repenting are saved, while those who keep refusing are condemning themselves*. Even Jesus said, “...unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3 NAS).

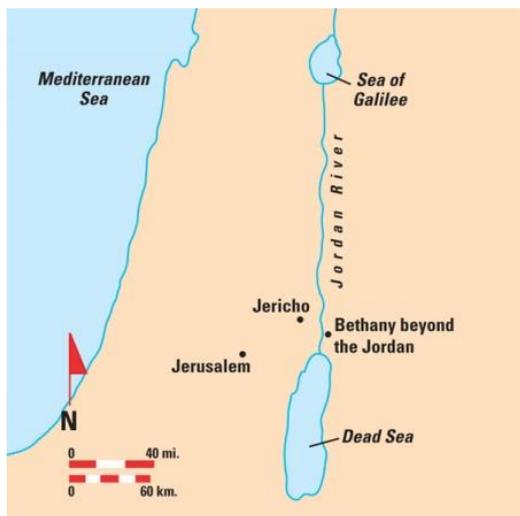
3. **John’s Work:** ²⁴ (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) ²⁵ They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” ²⁶ John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, ²⁷ [the one coming] after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.”

a. Think about these steps: John ✦was sent from God, ✦called people to repent, and ✦applied the means of grace in baptism. As those baptized

today receive the benefits of what Jesus has done, *so those baptized by John received the benefits of what Jesus would soon complete!*

- b. Jesus' greatness: Between a master and slave, *the difference is significant*, yet a slave would still remove the master's sandals. However, Jesus is **SO GREAT** that John was not even worthy to be Jesus' slave. Nevertheless, *John did fulfill his mission by pointing people to Jesus over and over again!* Let us do the same!

Conclusion: ²⁸ **These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.** // The Bible is true, *so the history and places are real!* There was a real place called Bethany, *two miles from Jerusalem*; the Bethany in today's text is another



Bethany, *about 40 miles to the east of Jerusalem and just on the east side of the Jordan River.*

Let us always be certain that ✓ the Bible is true and ✓ we are saved through Jesus' finished work!

Let us pray: Dear Father in heaven, in today's world of sin and death, help us to be like John by ✓ sharing Your Word, ✓ calling people to repent, and ✓ pointing them to Jesus!

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