

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).

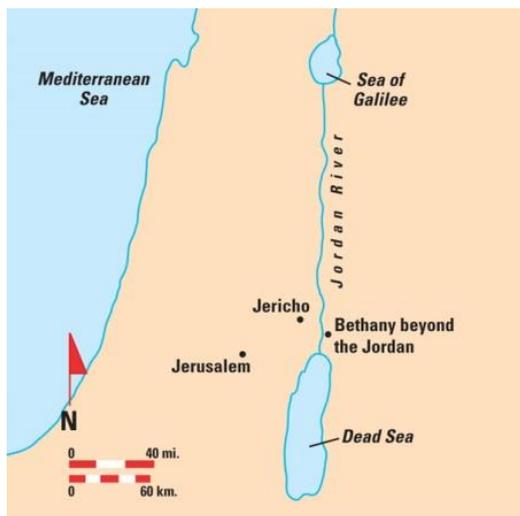
3. **John’s Work:** ²⁴ (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) ²⁵ They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” ²⁶ John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, ²⁷ [the one coming] after me, the strap 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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Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, Ohio 44134, 440-845-2230