

A Reliable Witness

Preached: 12/06/2020; 2nd Sunday in Advent – Germantown;

Advent:

The season of Advent challenges us to not just remember a baby that was born to Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. Advent calls us to a time of reflection and contemplation about that child. Advent challenges us to slow down, even to stop the torrid pace of our lives for some moments of rest. Don't let your schedule become so full, that you miss the significance of this season.

The Advent Wreath

As the season moves forward toward Christmas, the light on our Wreath grows brighter. The Advent wreath is made up of 4 candles in a circle around a candle in the center of the wreath. Three of the candles on the wreath are purple. Color has always been used in times of worship to express certain messages. Color stimulates our mind to think of certain realities. Purple is a color of royalty. We are reminded that Jesus was born to be a King. The candles in the circle each represent one of the themes of the season – **HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE**. The candle in the center represents Jesus. We light the Christ Candle on Christmas Eve. Once again we declare that our world needs to hear words of Hope, words of Peace, words of Joy, and words of Love. And we certainly need to be reminded that God has not abandoned this world but has come to the world in the person of Jesus.

So today we light the second candle on our Advent wreath – the **candle of peace**. When the Bible speaks about the birth of the promised Messiah, one of the things that we anticipate in the day of Messiah's reign is that the coming of the new age will be characterized by Peace. The angels sang about it on the night He was born when they announced the birth of Jesus to the Shepherds - ¹⁴ ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”***

Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

Prayer

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You are a God who exists as 3 persons.

You are at peace, in perfect harmony with each other. We live in a world, that is filled with discord, turmoil and conflict. We long to experience the peace and harmony that come from you. Forgive us Lord when we are responsible for the conflict. Let us be agents of reconciliation. The prophet describes a time when former enemies will get along. As we light this candle, our prayer today is that the day of peace will come quickly and will come soon. Amen.

Scripture

John 1:1-18

Message

A Reliable Witness

A reliable and truthful witness will usually help to settle a dispute or confirm an observation.

During these weeks in the season of Advent, we are looking at the Prologue to John's gospel – verses 1-18. John does not tell us the stories that Matthew and Luke tell us about the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. John's focus is on the person and mission of Jesus. Who is He and why did He come to earth. It is important to look at these verses so that we understand that Jesus was more than just a cute little baby who was born in Bethlehem. Unfortunately, that is all that many people think about when they are observing the holiday of Christmas. Their thoughts of the season have nothing to do with the coming of God into the world in the person of Jesus. John reminds us that He was no ordinary baby. For many the Christmas holiday has been secularized and it has no spiritual meaning. We must avoid that way of thinking.

Last week we looked at the first 5 verses, where John tells us about a personality that He refers to as **The Word**. (Quote). We learn that when John speaks of the Word, he is talking about Jesus. We learn some things about Jesus. Jesus the Word existed in the Beginning. Jesus, the Word is God. Jesus the Word is the Creator. Jesus, the Word brings life and light into a world that is dark. These verses can be difficult to

understand on their own, but when we see them against the back drop of John's purpose in writing the book we begin to grasp their meaning. ³⁰ **Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.** ³¹ **But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.** John tells us that his purpose in writing this book is to convince people of some things that are true about Jesus so that they will believe in Him, so that they will commit themselves to following Jesus as the Lord of their life. When people become a believer in Jesus, John says that they will receive a gift of life – Real Life, Spiritual Life, Eternal life. John was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah – the promised one – and that Jesus was the Son of God. If those statements are true, we are forced to respond to Jesus in a much more serious way than many people do. You cannot ignore Him, or be non-committal toward Him if He is the Son of God.

How do we know that what John tells us about is true? What evidence is there to persuade us? Is there anyone who can back up John's claim? In verse 6 of our text, John seems to get off subject. He has been talking about The Word. Now he turns his attention to a man named John. Now, just a clarification. The author of this book is named John. He was one of Jesus' first followers, one of the 12 apostles. He is the brother of Simon Peter. The John that we read about beginning in verse 6, is another John – the one we know as John the Baptist. You can read the story of his birth in Luke 1.

What do we know about this other John – the Baptist and why is it important to hear about him. Vs. 6-8. The passage tells us first of all that he was **Sent by God**. In the Old Testament the prophet Isaiah announces that there will be a prophet who will come to prepare people for the coming of the Messiah.

**A voice of one calling:
"In the wilderness prepare
the way for the LORD;
make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.
(Isaiah 40:3).**

The New Testament writers understand that this John – the Baptist - was the fulfillment of that promise. He had been sent by God to help people be ready to hear the Messiah when he came and then would believe in Him. How do we know that John was sent by God. That's important to John's argument here. If he has been sent by God, then he should be listened to. John's birth had been a miraculous birth, born to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age. He had come from God. His father Zechariah understood John's mission would be to get people ready for the Messiah. John understands his mission (**Vs. 7, 15**). His mission was to be a witness who would tell people about the Light of God that had come into the world, so that they would believe in Him. John's words sound very familiar to the words that John the author of the book writes. He wanted people to believe.

He was not the light, he was only a witness to the light. There is a principle of Jewish law that is important here as we learn about the ministry of John the Baptist. According to Jewish law, a story had to be confirmed by more than one witness. **Deuteronomy 19:15 - ¹⁵ One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.** So the reason John the apostle includes the story of John the Baptist at this point is to provide another witness about who Jesus is. Providing witnesses to support his claims about Jesus is an important part of this gospel. Nathanael, Peter, Martha, Thomas are all corroborating witnesses about who Jesus is. Jesus refers to the works that he performed as a witness to His claim to be the Son of God. And God the Father Himself bears witness to Jesus. John the Baptist is a witness pointing people to Jesus as the Light of the world.

John is a reliable witness about Jesus. His ministry supports John the author's claim that Jesus is the Son of God. Now, what does this have to do with you and me?

John's witness challenges us to understand the significance of this person names Jesus. He is more than just the baby born in Bethlehem and placed in a feed trough. Does that change the way you think about Jesus? Does that change the way you relate to Jesus?

A second way that the story of John affects us is this: I think that John also provides an example for us to follow. John's mission, his purpose was to point people to Jesus. I believe that we are to be faithful and reliable witnesses about Jesus. If Jesus is who he claimed to be, who John believed him to be, then we must do whatever we can to persuade people to believe in Him. John the author of this book tells us that people need to believe in Him in order to receive the gift of life. As we go through this season of Advent, I believe that we must look for opportunities to point people to Jesus – not to a little baby, but to the One who can give Light and Life to all who follow Him.