

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 28TH – 29TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

A VOICE CRYING OUT (JOHN 1:19–28)

John's opening "sermonette" (vs. 1–18) comes to an end, and the scene now opens on John the Baptizer at the River Jordan (vs. 19, 28).

- John the Baptizer was a very eccentric and strange figure, so it makes sense that an investigative committee of religious leaders was sent.
- John the Baptizer's appearance, presentation, and activity lead this committee to ask him, "Who are you?" (vs. 19).

John's immediate response was that he wasn't the Messiah, to which the religious leaders asked, "Are you Elijah?" and "Are you the Prophet?" (vs. 20-21).

- Malachi prophesized that Elijah would come before the Day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5–6), and in Deuteronomy 18, God promised that another prophet like Moses would come.
- But John lays no claim to these titles.

Jesus noted that, in a sense, John **was** Elijah because he ministered in the office and spirit of Elijah (Matthew 11:13–14; Mark 9:11–13).

- John the Baptizer didn't identify himself in those terms: he confessed that he was simply a "voice crying out in the wilderness. to make straight the way of the Lord" (vs. 23; Isa. 40:3).
- John was there only to point others to the one who was to come: the Messiah.

Why then did John baptize? Religious leaders in that day would only baptize Gentiles who wanted to adopt the Jewish faith (vs. 26).

- John's baptism was more than just an empty, well-known, traditional ritual; it was more than likely a radical kind of practice that involved the renunciation of all evil, complete immersion in water, and then re-identification as a convert into a new kind of life and holiness.

Those hung up on dead religion can never understand things like genuine repentance, heart change, and radical obedience.

- John baptized with water for repentance, but there was someone coming after him who would do a much greater work (vs. 26).
- The One coming was so much greater than John that he deemed himself unworthy to even be a servant (vs. 27).

Yet, the One who was coming will do far more for humanity in His humility than simply untying a sandal.

- Amazingly, this Messiah will even wash the feet of His own disciples (John 13).
- John the Baptizer's example for us:
 1. We are not the focus of any form of ministry.
 2. We are not the light.
 3. We proclaim in humility the truth of Jesus.

THE LAMB OF GOD (JOHN 1:29–34)

The people of Israel were familiar with lambs for sacrifices: a lamb was offered at Passover for each family, and during the year, two lambs were sacrificed each day on the altar at the temple.

- Other lambs were brought to the temple by Jewish worshippers for personal sacrifices.
- The prophet Isaiah had said that the Messiah would be led like a lamb to the slaughter (Isa. 53:7).
- The concept of a lamb was closely connected to the idea of the Messiah who God would someday send for His people.

This Messiah, like a lamb, would be innocent, would be offered as a substitutionary sacrifice, and would provide redemptive power like the Passover lamb from Exodus.

- John the Baptizer declared that Jesus was the "Lamb of God": the promised Messiah (vs. 29).

"...WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD..."

This is the first announcement in John's Gospel that Jesus had come to the world to die as a sacrifice for the sin of the entire world.

- Jesus would bear the entire guilt of humanity upon Himself and pay the full penalty, taking away its curse.
- The sacrifice of Jesus has all the capacity to forgive every sin and cleanse every sinner.

Verses 30–34 give us the testimony of John the Baptizer: that Jesus is the Son of God.

- The details of the baptism of Jesus are omitted (probably because we already have them in Matthew, Mark, and Luke).
- But what is included is the eyewitness testimony of John the Baptizer about what he saw that convinced him that Jesus is the Son of God.

Even though John had been declaring that the Messiah was coming, he apparently didn't know that Jesus was that Messiah as he was preaching and baptizing (vs. 30–31).

- But when Jesus came to be baptized, John saw the Holy Spirit descending from Heaven to rest on Jesus like a dove (vs. 32).
- This was a confirmation of something God had already spoken to John (vs. 33).

God had revealed to John that he would know who the Messiah was by the sign of the Spirit descending and resting upon Him.

- John baptized with water, but the Son of God would come to baptize with the Holy Spirit.
- What does it mean to be baptized ("immersed") with the Holy Spirit?
- In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was usually given only to prophets, priests, and kings.

The prophets pointed to a day when the Holy Spirit would be "poured out on all flesh" (Joel 2:28).

- Now John is testifying that through the Son of God (the "Lamb"), we all can have access to an "immersion" by the very Spirit of the living God.
- This is the transforming work and power of Jesus by placing the Holy Spirit in us and changing our hearts from the inside out.

COME AND SEE (JOHN 1:35–42)

The next day, John the Baptizer was standing with two of his disciples as Jesus passed by.

- One of them was Andrew (vs. 40), but we're not told who the other one was.
- It's quite possible that the other one was John, the writer of this Gospel, who will appear several other times in the narrative.
- John the Baptizer declares Jesus as the Lamb of God, and immediately loses two disciples to Jesus (vs. 35–37).

How open-handed are we with the ministries and people we lead?

- So often, we hold on too tightly to things because we see ourselves as owners instead of stewards. Jesus should be the one we want others to follow, not us!
- As John the Baptizer releases two of his disciples to follow Jesus, Jesus asks them a very loaded and provocative question.

"WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?" (VS. 38)

These are the first recorded words of Jesus in John's Gospel.

- It's almost as if Jesus is asking this question to us as the reader.
- What were these disciples' motivations in following Jesus? Was it idle curiosity? Was it inspired by the hopes of receiving material blessings or power? Or did they really want to know **Him**?

I don't quite know what to make of these disciples' response: it's almost as if they don't know how to answer. So they ask Jesus another question, "where are you staying?"

- "Come and see" is Jesus' response, so they spend the day with Him.
- Sometime during that day, they must've seen enough of Jesus to be convinced of His identity, so Andrew calls for his brother Simon (vs. 41–42).

John says that Jesus "gazed upon" Simon intently, as if He knew Simon before He met him, and He knew what Simon would become (vs. 42).

- At some unmarked time in Simon's future, he will be the first to confess Jesus as the Christ, he will be the great preacher of Pentecost, he will heal the lame, and he will raise the dead.
- But Simon doesn't know any of this about himself or about his life.

All he knows at this point is that his brother has claimed that this man, Jesus, is the Messiah.

- Jesus gazes at Simon and gives him a new name ("Peter," "rock") that doesn't quite make sense yet, but someday it will.
- Revelation 2:17 speaks of a time when we will be handed a white stone on which will be written a new name: a name that God knows us by that perfectly describes who we truly are.

FOLLOW ME (JOHN 1:43–51)

The next day, Jesus traveled to Galilee and found a man named Phillip and told him, "Follow me."

- This was a remarkable invitation, but it's one that Phillip accepted (vs. 43–44).
- Phillip had a friend named Nathaniel, whom he told about Jesus (vs. 45).
- Yet Nathaniel was skeptical and asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (vs. 46).

To Nathaniel, the Messiah of Israel surely could not have come from such a lowly and unimportant place like Nazareth.

- Some of us feel just as skeptical about Jesus being the answer to our greatest problems.
- Phillip's response simply imitated Jesus: "Come and see" (vs. 46).
- Nathaniel, still quite skeptical, comes to see Jesus with Phillip (vs. 47).

Jesus' greeting of Nathaniel seems to indicate that He already knew Nathaniel's character: "he was an Israelite in whom there was no deceit" (vs. 47b).

- Nathaniel seems to cynically respond, "How do you know me?"
- Jesus answers, "I saw you before Phillip called you, when you were sitting under the fig tree" (vs. 48).

Fig trees were seen in the 1st century as a symbol for Israel, and as such, had become common places for prayer and meditation on the Torah.

- It's highly likely that Nathaniel was under the fig tree praying, maybe even contemplating the hope of the coming Messiah.
- Jesus saw him and heard his prayers! Jesus knew what was in his heart, all of his activity, and all of his hopes, fears, and dreams.

Nathaniel's response is one of awe, wonder, and worship (vs. 49).

- Jesus says, "You believe just because I saw you under the fig tree? You're going to see greater things..." (vs. 50).
 - What does Jesus mean in vs. 51? Think back to Jesus' greeting of Nathaniel in vs. 47: he was a true Israelite, in whom there was no deceit. There was a man of deceit named "Israel" who saw Heaven open.
- Jacob (Israel), the man of deceit, experienced a dream in Genesis 28 that involved a ladder that went to Heaven, upon which angels were going up and down.
- What Jacob could only dream about, a way to Heaven, Nathaniel and the other followers of Jesus would actually see.
 - Jesus was Jacob's dream come true; He was the way to Heaven.

"WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?"

- What are our motivations for being here? Are we here to impress someone? Out of guilt? Out of fear? Out of obligation?
- What are you really searching for? We're all searching for fulfillment, security, and rest.
- We're all searching for that kind of life in all manner of things.
- Jesus has come to offer life (John 10:10).

"HOW DO YOU KNOW ME?"

- Jesus knows who you are now, the true character of your heart: and He still invites you to follow.
- Jesus knows who you have been: and He still invites you to follow.
- Jesus knows who you someday will become: and He invites you to follow Him so He can make you into that person. Jesus calls you by your real name.

"COME AND SEE."

- Maybe you don't know who you are or what it is you're even looking for.
- In this great invitation to follow Jesus, there are answers to questions you don't even know how to ask yet.
- You will see greater things than you can possibly imagine that you can only dream about right now if you simply believe and follow.