

Trinity Presbyterian Church - Carp- July 11, 2021

**TO EXALT CHRIST;
TO EQUIP, ENCOURAGE, EXHORT, EDIFY GOD'S ELECT**

The Christ Who Follows - John 1:19

The Question - The Declaration - The Explanation

Last Sunday we were in John 1:1-18. Our headings were the Word, the Witness, the World, the Wonderment and the Works, Our sermon was entitled *The Christ Who Is Heavenly & Human*. The first five verses revealed the fullness, the completeness, the sufficiency that exists solely in Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God. In the opening lines John the gospel writer shows us the Word i.e. Jesus Christ being fully divine, eternal, creative, omnipotent and sovereign over a well-ordered universe he created, including earth.

Those verses show us the pre-incarnate Christ. Then in verse 14 John shows us the wonderment of the Christ, the Son, who became incarnate, taking on our flesh and dwelling among us.

We met the one who was sent from God, John the Baptist to be a witness to Christ. We considered how John the gospel writer was also a witness to the incarnate Christ. We noted how grace and truth came through Christ. John called him the One & Only and the one & only to have seen the Father.

We saw the uniqueness of the Christ. This Sunday our sermon is *The Christ Who Follows*. Though Jesus preceded John the Baptist because he is divine and therefore eternal, this morning we will see how the incarnate Jesus followed John the Baptist.

The Question - 1:19-22

We read in verse 19 how priests and Levites were sent from Jerusalem to ask John the Baptist the question, "[Who are you?](#)". News must have come to Jerusalem of someone in the Judean desert wearing camel hair clothing & eating locusts & wild honey. He was preaching a baptism of repentance. People were flocking to hear him and be baptized. Matthew & Mark record all this.

This wildish man warranted the attention of the top religious officials for what he was preaching and doing. However, there is another reason for their curiosity to be aroused. There

had been 450 years of prophetic silence in what is called the inter-testamental period. God had not spoken for 450 years through any prophet.

Malachi was considered to be the last of the prophets. But now after 450 years the silence is broken, first by two babies; one in Judea, with the birth of John the Baptist; the other six months later in a manger in Bethlehem, with the birth of the Son of God, the Christ. That is the first instance of Jesus following John the Baptist. But now the silence has been broken again by that same John, now an adult, in the desert, preceding Jesus, preaching, prophesying and baptizing. Curiosity therefore prompted this expedition by the priests/Levites to the desert who asked John - "*Who are you?*".

He answers first by saying who he is not. Verse 20 - "*He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely. "I am not the Christ."*" A confession means telling the truth which John was. He was not the Christ. Obviously that is who they thought John might be, the long -- prophesied Christ, the Messiah promised by the prophets,

John is not ambiguous in his answer. He knew his place and role in redemptive history and the plan and purpose of God. In Luke 1:76-77, Zechariah's prophetic song about John said - "*and you my child will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.*"

John was sent from God "*to prepare the way for him,* (Jesus the Christ) "*to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.*" Salvation in Christ forgave sin.

Later in John 3:30 John says -- "*He must become greater: I must become less.*" He was not the Christ. Neither was he Elijah which was their second question. Neither was he "*the Prophet*" which referred to a prophet Moses spoke about in Deuteronomy 18. So after three questions and three denials, they then asked questions 4 and 5 in verse 22 - "*Who are you? Give us an answer we can take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?*"

The Declaration - 1:23

In verse 23 we read - "*John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one crying in the desert. 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"*" John did not give them his name. He simply referred to himself as "*the voice*". His name was not important, only his role which was to fulfill a prophecy to "*Make straight the way for the Lord.*" How was John to make

the way straight for Jesus, IOW a moral transformation? As the voice he was to cry out, to preach like Isaiah. To cry out as a preacher shows the seriousness of the situation and the passion one has about it.

But what was he to preach? Remember the words of Zechariah's song about John? He had sung - "*and you my child will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.*"

John was to preach seriously and passionately to give the people knowledge of salvation. They needed to know how they could be saved. They needed to know the forgiveness of their sins. They needed to know the Lord who alone could save and forgive them. It was to be done in what John preached.

In Matthew 3:1,11 Matthew wrote of what John was preaching - "*In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.... I baptize you with water for repentance"*" He did not even mention sin. He did not have to. Sin has its own power to convict. You only need to repent from sin, that which is unrighteous.

John's quote in verse 23 was from Isaiah 40:3. The fact that John was preaching and baptizing in the desert would not be lost on the people he was preaching to. It was a reminder of their ancestors wandering aimlessly in the desert for 40 years because they lived in sin, in disobedience to the word of God and its authority over their lives. The people of John's day were wandering aimlessly as their ancestors had. They needed to "*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.*" They needed to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.

The entire world needs to repent, to turn around and turn to Christ for the forgiveness of sins. 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 reminds us of the power & promise of God when he said to his people - "*When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*" If we did that God says he will hear, forgive and he will heal each one.

We have noted that John in his reply to the priests and Levites did not tell them his name. He did not say, "I am John the Baptist." He only referred to himself as "*the voice...*" John is not

promoting himself but instead he is directing their attention to the Lord, to the Christ who would follow him. That is what preachers must do. John Calvin said. *"If the gospel be not preached, Jesus Christ is, as it were, buried. Therefore, let us stand as witnesses, and do Him this honor, when we see all the world so far out of the way; and remain steadfast in this wholesome doctrine."* The entire NT focuses exclusively upon this wholesome doctrine, namely the gospel embodied in the Christ. That is who John refers to in...

The Explanation -- 1:24-28

John was first questioned by priests/Levites from Jerusalem. But now some Pharisees question him. They want to know - *"Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"* Good question. Why did John baptize?

What was the precedent for him to do so? The OT never mentions baptism so the word itself was not a carry-over but the practice perhaps was. The OT does mention purification which was accomplished by washing with water. John may have adapted that practice and brought it forward to NT application.

In verse 26 John answered by saying - *"I baptize with water."* We quoted earlier Matthew 3:11 where John said - *"I baptize you with water for repentance..."* Repentance in Hebrew & Greek means, *"to be sorry, to think differently, a reformation, a reversal"*. When we combine the OT practice of washing with water for purification, with John's use of the word, 'repentance', we can see how John initiated the NT practice of baptism with water for repentance, IOW for change, to think differently, to be reformed.

Repentance purifies the soul. Water is the outward sign of something happening inwardly in the life of one who has received *"the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins."* John was saying I am the voice of one preaching repentance. You know me. But there is someone you need to know more, *"the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."* You know me, *"but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me...."* John is speaking of the Christ who follows him.

He stands among you John tells them/us. He is the Word. He is God incarnate, made flesh, dwelling among you/us. Died & rose again for our justification & eternal salvation. Here is the question for us. Do we know him? *Soli Deo Gloria*. Amen.