

## Confessing Freely

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Third Sunday in Advent) is John 1:6-8, 26-38. This text is a recording of John the Baptist vigorously pointing to Jesus as the Savior of the world.

John was not some random man who dressed funny and had a very unusual diet. The Jewish people had been waiting a long time for the promised Messiah to come. They were quick to check on anyone who seemed to publicly show some promise. John's fire and brimstone preaching in the desert quickly drew quite a following. But the difference between John and all the others is as verse 6 states: "who was sent from God; his name was John."

John's role is quickly defined in verses 7-8 where it states: "He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light." John does this continually moving the crowd's attention away from himself and steering them to Jesus.

In verses 26-28 John cites some differences between himself and Jesus. He baptizes with water but Jesus will baptize with fire. John says of Jesus that he is not worthy of loosing Jesus sandals. To untie sandals was a menial task, fit for a slave. Disciples would perform all sorts of service for their rabbis (teachers), but loosing sandal thongs was expressly excluded.

As a faithful servant, John sets an example of humility and reverence for us. Ironically, the One whose sandal John was unworthy to untie became the Suffering Servant, who bore all our sins.

In verses 29-34 John identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God that will take away the sins of the world. John also continues his intense testimony that Jesus is the one whom he is pointing to and not himself.

John did such a convincing job of being a witness to Jesus that in verses 35-38 two of his own disciples approach Jesus with a desire to be Jesus' disciples.

In our society the world is searching for what they do not even know. In this Advent season many people are focused on the earthly trappings of physical pleasures and not the real reason for this season.

John was able to do this confessing because he was called by God. Today, the Lord gives us His Spirit in Holy Baptism. In Baptism, Jesus Christ has taken away our sin, and the Spirit daily assures us of His merciful goodness toward us.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments we can use this Advent time to zero in on Christ the Lamb of God as the sole focus of our attention being a witness in this busy season.

Prayer: O Christ, prepare a royal highway in my heart, that I may receive you in steadfast humility and joy. Amen. (TLSB)