

**“John: Witnessing”**  
*John 1:6-8, 19-28*

This week we continue in our series that looks at the man Jesus... the One whose ‘advent’ we Christians await... through the eyes of those who knew Him best. That is precisely why Scripture is so **vital** in our understanding of the very nature and character of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Because it is written by those who knew them *intimately*. If you really want to know about a book, or a movie, who do you ask? Someone who has *read* it! Someone who has *seen* it! Someone who really knows what they are talking about. Last week, we considered some words of the disciple Peter, who certainly knew Jesus VERY well. Peter would remind us that God’s timing is NOT our timing. That Jesus IS coming back, but we don’t know when. And until He does, we need to **‘wait patiently’**... in **peace**, in **repentance**, in **gratitude** for God’s mercy. **“Not wanting any to perish, but all to come...”**

As I said, I found it very interesting... and personally gratifying... that someone as impulsive and headstrong as Peter could talk about being **patient**. Particularly given that ‘patience’ is something that in certain cases, I really have to work on myself. But what I find most affirming is that despite his shortcomings... despite the fact that for all the times that he showed such great **faith**, Peter also demonstrated great **failures**... God still used him powerfully. Jesus had enough confidence in Peter, ‘warts and all,’ that He would declare this disciple to be one through whom the church would be built. Like that book title I referred to once, *“God uses cracked pots.”* And if God can use a ‘cracked pot’ like Peter, He can sure use me.

Today we consider another powerful... and eccentric... figure in the spiritual formation of early believers in Christ: John the Baptist. For as driving a force as John the Baptist (or as I will also refer to him for short, **“JB”**) was, he was also quite an unusual character. I’m thinking that he probably fell in that **“1%”** category that our brother Trip Wamsley referred to in his testimony a few weeks back!

**“JB”**, as many of you know, had some pretty peculiar dietary habits and fashion sense. But regardless of his taste in clothes and food, God used him **mightily** to ‘prepare the way for the Lord.’ No matter his idiosyncrasies, when JB spoke, people came out of the ‘woodwork’, out of the surrounding countryside, to hear. Why? He wasn’t a man of great power, prestige, or position. But

what he DID do was to speak with an **irresistible authority**. Like the One whom he was pointing others to. Remember what was said about Jesus when He 'wowed' the people on the mountainside with the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, and other powerful words of wisdom... **"the crowds were amazed... because he taught as one who had authority."** John 'the Baptizer' had that same amazing, mesmerizing quality... because of the One who 'inspired' his words. The One who truly gave him his authority.

This season of Advent is a time of preparation... of waiting. **Waiting** on the Lord, seeking Him, learning more about Him, so that our lives can be what God wants them to be. [*'Waiting'* – like in a restaurant] And in that time of 'waiting', of 'serving', we must also be **preparing** ourselves... and others... for Jesus' return. [Waiters – often students] What are we doing to, as JB said, **"make straight the way of the Lord"**? **What are you and I doing to make sure that whenever that time comes to meet Jesus face-to-face, WE ARE READY?!** Well, one of the most effective ways we 'prepare' ourselves is by learning from the example, from the 'eye-witness', of faithful followers like Peter and John the B.

It's easy to look at such a phenomenal, powerful leader like 'JB' and feel inadequate. **'I could never do that. I could never be so bold as to preach like he did. I could never 'prepare the way for the Lord' like he did.'** LISTEN... it doesn't matter if you're 'John the Baptist' or 'Joe the turkey fryer'; if your name is Peter or Paulette; Chan or Chester. **Every one of us** can, and must, be used by God to spread the Good News of the Gospel. As believers in Jesus Christ, we are all **sent by God** to **testify to the Light**. WHY? **"so that all might believe through Him."** HOW? By doing what JB did.

1) When those who doubted, who were intimidated/threatened by JB, challenged him, and pushed him for an answer to who he was, and why he was doing what he was, what did he say: **"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'" As the prophet Isaiah said."** (v. 23) **He went to the Scriptures**. JB went to the SOURCE of truth and wisdom. Not his own. But that which is inspired not by man, but by **God**. Just like the One who was to come, John used God's Holy Word as the basis for his (authority). And remember, **"the crowds were amazed because he spoke as one with authority."** If you stand firm on the foundation of The Bible, people will be amazed at you, because you speak as one with **irresistible authority**. (Confession – *"Scripture = authoritative witness"...* *"the witness without parallel."*)

2) Because of his reliance on Scripture... because he knew that he was **"sent by God"**...

there was NO HESITATION on JB's part when confronted. When these powerful men pressed into him, asking **"who are you?"** it says that **"He confessed and did not deny it..."** Confident of his purpose, of his calling that **"all might believe through him,"** **John did not avoid talking about his faith.** He wasn't bashful about his identity as what would become known in the 70's as a "Jesus freak." You and I should be in agreement with the words of Paul in *Romans*: **"I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of everyone who believes."** (1:16) For, as the Scriptures remind us, we must **"always be prepared to give the reason for the hope that is in you."**

3) Another reason that John the Baptist was afforded the opportunity to speak... with such authority... is that he was REAL. When asked **"what do you say about yourself?"** he replied, **"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness."** He gave a **personal testimony** of his Christian walk. 'I am one who is lost, who is not sure where he's going, who is not sure how God is going to deliver me... but I know that He IS!' 'That as I prepare a path for Him, as I **"make straight the way of the Lord,"** that I am confident that He will take me with Him along that path. '

Friends, that is what your friends need to hear. Not that you have all the answers. Not that your life is perfect. (Yeah, RIGHT!) But that you are just like those Israelites we read about in the Bible. Wandering around in the wilderness, full of doubt, full of sin... but **following YHWH nonetheless!** And that, just like JB, as you prepare the way for the Lord, He will, in later words of Jesus in John's Gospel: **"I will take you to be with me..."**

4) Finally, what made John the Baptist such a great leader was his **Humility.** That even though Jesus would declare 'The Baptizer' to be the greatest of ALL the prophets, John would declare himself unworthy to even untie Jesus' sandals... in effect proclaiming himself to be not better than a common slave. In the religious leaders line of questions, I believe that there was a definite undertone of 'and just who do you think YOU are?' And John did NOT think more of himself that he should. That compared to Jesus, he was nothing. But that WITH Christ, he was something very special indeed. And that with God's help... and the help of other 'God-followers'... JB would indeed emerge victorious. While those priests and Levites wanted to know who HE was, that wasn't important to him. He wanted them to see the One IN Him. That, to borrow from a contemporary hymn, there is **"Victory in Jesus"...** **alone!** Only in Christ is there true victory.

As most of you are aware, this past Wednesday marked the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pearl Harbor. Dec. 7, 1941. Described by President F.D.R. with some of the most famous words ever spoken: **"a date that will live in infamy."**

In some of the final words of that speech, Roosevelt declared that *“with confidence in our armed forces (i.e. that **power** that **defends/protects** us)... with the unbounded determination of our people – we will gain the inevitable triumph... so help us God.”*

Despite whatever shortcomings he might have had... physical, mental, relational... FDR will go down as one of the greatest leaders of all time. Why?

DETERMINATION. NO HESITATION. PERSONAL. RECOGNITION OF A POWER GREATER THAN SELF. With a trust in a strength that will protect... a determination that will empower... confidence in the ultimate victory... relying on more than human strength and wisdom... and the willingness to **boldly proclaim** what he believed to be the **truth**... no matter what his opponents might argue...

Pres. Roosevelt helped to inspire a nation to rise from the depths of despair, loss, tragedy to pull together and claim **victory**. **To boldly make a statement for the whole world to see, that this United States stands for FREEDOM.**

My brothers and sisters in Christ, you and I are also called to be the standard bearers for freedom. The TRUE freedom that can only come in a relationship with Jesus Christ. As we consider the ways in which God is **sending US** out into the world, I would leave you with the opening verses of today’s passage from John... with a few ‘alterations’... *“There was a church sent from God, whose name was F.P.C. They came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through them. They were not the light, but came to testify to the light.”*

We have same mission as John – “so that all might believe through..US!  
Let us go forward and testify to the true light of the world, **Jesus Christ.**