

December 17, 2017

Advent 3

ILC, Wichita, KS

John 1: 6-8; "Feel the pain... See the Light"

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Text which forms the basis for my message today is taken from the Gospel lesson. If you would turn to the back cover of you bulletin to the Gospel lesson. I would like to reread the first paragraph of the Gospel. From the Gospel of John, the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter, verses 6-8 we read:

*"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light."*

Here ends the text.

My good friends in Christ.

Today is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent is referred to as the Sunday of Joy. Our Scripture readings, the hymns, the liturgy are all to reflect – joy. It is probably a good reason that the church has designated the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent as the Sunday of Joy because at this time there are many who are not real joy-filled.

This past week... my allergies were acting up. As you might have noticed... I wasn't in my usual jovial mood. When I get like this... I have a good friend that I phone. He lets me whine into the phone. When I was done whining about my allergies... he laughed and said ... **"This is the time of year ... when many people are in pain. And the pain that many people are in ... is not limited to physical pain."**

My friend ... then told me about a shopping experience that his teenage daughter and wife went on a couple of weeks ago. Now... mind you... right now... this friend of mine has a very high paying job in the Upper Midwest. The teenage daughter... like so many children... couldn't keep this secret from her father... so she told him this story.

The Mother and the daughter were shopping at a local Mall. The Mother spied an expensive coat that was trimmed with a fur collar.

**"This year," the Mother said, "I think that I will buy my own present instead of making you and dad shop for me."**

Her daughter nodded in agreement.

**“And I think that this coat with a fur collar would be perfect,”** the mother concluded.

The daughter began to protest...

**“But Mom”... she said.... Some poor... helpless... creature... has to suffer so that you can have this fur collar.”**

**“Don’t worry ... honey”, her mother said.**

**“Your father won’t get the bill for a couple of weeks.”**

Well... fathers and men... and those who pay the bills in your homes... I hope that it doesn’t hurt too much.

Humor helps us put it all into perspective.

But... how about you?

- Have you had bleak thoughts this season of Advent?
- Have you found yourself worrying more than usual about the future ... during this Advent season?
- If you and I permit him... Satan... is going to try and creep in there... and ruin everyone’s Advent.
- Satan is going to try and work on our minds ... so that we forget the reason for the season... which is the coming of the Christ Child of Bethlehem.
- Satan tried the same thing with the Children of Israel, to get them to lose focus... and not see the light that Christ is!  
And that is what John the Baptist refers to in the Gospel for today.

There are four points that I believe the Gospel is trying to share with us today. **(A four point sermon... get comfortable... this could be long...)** These four points are:

**First, John the Baptist came to testify... about the light of the world;**

**Secondly, John the Baptist is not the light of the world;**

**Third... John’s message leads us to the central doctrine of our Christian faith.**

**Finally... the Fourth point is... what are we to do with this central doctrine of Christianity...**

Let’s begin with John’s message.

I. *John the Baptist came.... as a witness .....to testify concerning that light.*

A. **The people of John’s day needed to hear his witness for they had gotten off track.** As we understand the theology of the Old Testament, the people of God were to be focused on the coming of the Messiah.

- B. Yet for a variety of human reasons, they had lost focus.** The children of Israel had placed the coming of the Messiah at the bottom of their list of areas of focus.

The religious people of our Lord's Day were more concerned about..... the law – what you were and what you were not supposed to do.

They had surrendered their looking for the Messiah... to their own human wills and whims.

- C. When we get past all the reasons and excuses ... why the religious leaders of Jesus day had done this... the bottom line is... there was one who was trying to lead them away from God and that one is Satan.** Satan was doing everything in his power to lead God's people away from looking for the Messiah.

Satan had so manipulated the people of God so that they were more concerned about:

- the Roman government,
- social and political freedoms,
- economics and health.

Satan threw all these issues out there to absorb the children of Israel and so lose focus on the Call of the Old Testament. So... the people needed to hear this message from John:

**The Messiah is Coming! Get ready. The prayers of thousands of years are being answered.**

*II. The second point... Yet... John the Baptist was not the light.*

- A. Through the Scriptures we learn that there were many in our Lord's Day who missed the point. Yet... Because John spoke such a powerful testimony, many thought perhaps he was the light, or the Messiah, or perhaps even Elijah?
- B. Let's bring that thought forward.... To our day... There are many in our day who are also missing the point. They miss that Christ has come and Christ will come again. Some do not accept Christ as their Savior, some have only lip service with Christ,
- C. The message of John the Baptist was powerful because it held the **central doctrine** of Christianity.

*III. The third point... What is that central doctrine?*

Quite simply... Jesus Christ came to our world to save us from our sins. Our Lord accomplished this through His suffering and death on the Cross. Through Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection, He offers to all that believe in Him forgiveness of sins and eternal life with Him in Heaven. Christ offers us eternity! This is called grace. God loved us so much that He has saved us from our sins. Jesus Christ came to our world to save us from our sin. Through our Lord's freely and willingly dying on the Cross and rising from the grave all who believe in Christ Jesus have forgiveness of their sins and eternal life with God in heaven.

*IV. So finally,... we come to the Fourth and last point... What are we to do with this grace? In verse 8 in the Gospel for today we read: "He was not the light... but came to bear witness about the light..."*

- A. We are to be witnesses to the Light that Jesus Christ is.
- B. How can we be witnesses? By the way in which we live our lives... we can share with others the Good News about Jesus Christ.
  - 1. For instance.... If you find yourself in a long, slow line in the store don't get stressed out.... instead strike up a pleasant conversation with someone. Let them see the Light of Christ shine through you.
  - 2. Or... If you are having a difficult time at work and you feel stressed out, then go in and visit with your boss. Tell them that you are trying to do a good job, but you are going through holiday stress. Ask your boss for advice? That is a good way to let them see the Light of Christ shine through you.
  - 3. Or try this.... If you feel no joy in your heart this holiday season because of problems in your family, the death of a loved one – then go down to the Salvation Army and volunteer some time in service to others. The best way to get out of ourselves is by going to help those less fortunate than ourselves. Let others see the Light of Christ shine through you.

And if you want a special blessing then come down to the Communion Rail today... for when you receive the true body and blood of Jesus Christ... our Lord is been made a physical part of your life... Christ will give you guidance.

And in the meantime – don't miss the point this Advent season. Look at the pink candle on the Advent wreath.... Be joy filled for Christ is coming! Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.