

“He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light” (John 1:7-8)

There was a politician who was running in a very close election against a very clever campaigner. He had a good message and an exciting platform, but he was not well known. Thus he had to make a lot of speeches around the district, go to many meetings, attend tea parties, receptions, church gatherings, and touch every person face to face in the district. It was still an uphill battle. A good friend of his was his advance man, the fellow who made the arrangements for all the events and speeches for the campaign. He was not a very good advance man; rather he was unreliable and pompous and, worst of all, disorganized. The other people in the campaign hated him, but the candidate stuck with his friend. As the election drew near, the polls showed the candidate losing ground. The advance man knew they were going to lose, so he gave up altogether. The campaign self-destructed in the last week. Yet the candidate lost by only one half of one percent of the votes. All the media people said that if the campaign had been better organized, the voters would have got to know the candidate better and he would have won in a walk. We're supposed to be the advance people for Jesus.

Throughout this Advent season, we are waiting for God through the birth of the Christ Child. And at the same time God is waiting for us; God anticipates coming to us; God touches down on earth through the birth of the Christ Child. In today's Gospel lesson, when God's time was full, God sent one man whose name was John as an advance man to prepare the way for the LORD. He was becoming popular and influential among the people; more people listened to his words and followed him because they had been waiting for and listening to God's voice spoken through the prophet. As a result of this, the religious leaders of Jerusalem felt threatened by John's existence and activities so they sent a group of priests and officials to investigate John.

First, John realizes who he is: He recognizes himself as one being sent from God. “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John” (v.6). I often thought to myself: Who am I - in relation to others and God? Who am I in the eyes of God? I would declare that I am a beloved son of God – precious and meaningful. What about you? What do you think that you are in the sight of God? Each of us was born and called in accordance with God's will and purpose, and we are living with the conviction that we are loved by God as well as taken care of by our Heavenly Father. Don't you think so?

A group of priests and officials asked John who he was. John was completely honest and told them: “I am not the Messiah” (v.19). They pressed him, “Who, then? Elijah?” “I am not.” “The Prophet?” “No.” Exasperated, they said, “Who are you?” They wanted to hear an answer. John finally responded to them, “I'm thunder in the desert: Make the road straight for God! I'm doing what the prophet Isaiah preached” (v. 23). John realized that he was a voice or thunder in which he appeared and then disappeared.

Secondly, John knew his mission given from God as he recited the words of the prophet Isaiah.

The Bible says, “He (John) came as a witness to testify concerning that light ...He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light” (vv.7- 8). His mission is to testify to the light, the Son of God; his work is to bear witness to the life of Jesus; he was not the message, but the messenger.

One week before Easter, when Jesus was going to enter Jerusalem, he was riding a donkey. Crowds gathered to cheer Jesus as Messiah, shouting “Hosanna,” and waving palm branches. A

Church tradition says Jesus was carried to Bethlehem in the womb of his mother Mary who was riding on a donkey. Can you imagine the donkey carrying Jesus? Perhaps the donkey thought,

“They are cheering for me! I’m such a great donkey! I’m the one! Who’s your daddy? I’m anointed, appointed, elected, perfected, selected, and connected! I’m blessed ...get me on television...hee-haw!” (Ed Delph, *The 5 Minute Miracle*, 58). The donkey carried Jesus, but was

not Jesus. Jesus chose the donkey, the donkey didn’t choose him. The donkey was chosen to carry a message, not to be the message.

John was carrying the true Light, but was not the Messiah. God chose John and sent him to testify to His Son Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the world. John played the role of an advance man as well as a messenger. He didn’t take the glory; but rather gave the glory to Jesus, who would come. The Bible presents to us John’s life as a gentle and humble servant of God like the donkey who carried Jesus. It once has been said, “The difference between run and ruin is ‘i.’” John recognized that he was running for Jesus, not himself.

Each of us is not only called by God, but also given work for the sake of God and others – family, friends, and community. Strive to serve others with the minds of Christ, knowing that God desires of you to be and to do.

Third, John worked for others that they might believe in Jesus: “He (John) came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was *there* to show the way to the Light” (*The Message Bible*. vv. 7-8).

I often reflect on these questions: Why am I here? In other words, what does God desire me to do here –for the sake of God, church, and community? My realization is that God placed me here to fulfill His will as well as to witness to Jesus through my life and ministry. What about you – why are you *here* where you are placed now with your family, friends, and community?

“A woman testifying at a prayer meeting: “I ain’t what I ought to be; and I ain’t what I’m going to be; but anyway, I ain’t what I was.” – Northern Lights

“Dim eyes cannot read fine print. Let your testimony for Christ be written in large letters that the world may see” – William Ward Ayer

“Lord, shine in me and so be in me that all with whom I come in contact may know their presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus” – John Henry Newman

God desires each of us to witness to the light who is coming into the world as Jesus, the Son of God; “make the road straight for God” by shining light upon people through your faith. Amen.