

## Sermon Transcript for January 9, 2022

Peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I don't know if you noticed, but if you look at the section of the hymnal where that song or that hymn comes from, it is labeled as Advent. "On Jordan's bank, the Baptist's cry." It's an Advent hymn. And why is it an Advent hymn? Because we focus on John the Baptist a lot during Advent, and now we're doing it again. It's almost as if this is something really important, a major event that is taking place in history, and we need to focus upon it. And it is. John is the culmination of the Old Testament. It's like the entire Old Testament is focused, finally, through this one person, John. And through John, the entire Old Testament then points to Jesus. John is a fulfillment and the culmination of everything that was before, and he points to that which is to come, who is Jesus Christ. When we think about the coming of Jesus, the advent of our Lord, John the Baptist, naturally, is the person and ministry that we talk about, the events of his life and how they connect to Jesus. In fact, you heard in Isaiah, a little bit of a different connection with the life and ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus. From Isaiah, you see at the end, then it says, "I will give you, as a covenant for the peoples, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeons, from the prison, those who sit in darkness."

Well, remember when John was sitting in the dungeon, in the darkness, and he was beginning to have some doubts and questions about who Jesus was and whether or not he had gotten things right. Because here he is in prison, and Jesus hasn't taken over the world. He hasn't shown Himself. He hasn't shown His power and might yet. And so, John is a little bit concerned. So John sends his disciples to Jesus and says, "Are you the one? Or, should we look for another?" Now, again, we've talked about this before. It seems odd that John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus, who pointed to Jesus and says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." That same man was wondering towards the end of his life, whether he had gotten it right, because he was in prison, and his circumstances didn't seem to match what he had perhaps thought was supposed to be the way it was going to go. I mean, which is kind of par for the course, because even at the very beginning, John didn't really have an understanding of how it was supposed to go, because he's baptizing in the Jordan. His message is very simple, "Repent." Not much more to his message than that. "You need to repent for the kingdom of God is at hand." His message was simple, and he assumed that he would point to Jesus, and Jesus would take over, and then the ministry would be Jesus'. Jesus comes and John points, "There's the lamb of God. He's going to take away the sins of the world." But when Jesus comes, He says, "I'm going to be baptized by you, John." And John's going, "Okay. I think I misheard you there. I thought you said you said you wanted to be bapt...wait, I need to be baptized by You. I'm the sinner. I'm the one who points to You. I'm Your servant, not the other way around. Why are You doing this?"

So even at the beginning of John's ministry, he didn't fully understand. He knew that was his job, to point to Jesus, but he didn't know exactly what that meant. So, if John the Baptist sometimes has doubts, there's hope for you and me, because we also have doubts in our lives. We also have times when we question our circumstances and say, "Really, God? Are You really with me? I mean, this is kind of hard. This is not the path that I would have chosen. Are You truly God? Or, should I look for another?" And God makes it clear that He works in ways that are different than this world.

Let's look at I Corinthians. Now, this one does not flatter us too much. Let's just put it bluntly. "For consider your calling brothers. Not many of you are wise, according to worldly standards, not many of you are powerful, or of noble birth, but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise." Welcome to the

foolish. God is basically saying we are not wise, at least not according to worldly standards. And when it comes to the things of God, none of us, not any of us, are wise. See, to call ourselves foolish, is to recognize our true place in this world. Can we say that we know and understand God fully? Without the power of the Holy Spirit, you look around, and you see all kinds of people doing all kinds of crazy things. I mean, I think there's like a new religion created every month, because somebody's looking for something. They're trying to find peace. They're trying to find hope. And they look to their own activities, their eating habits, their exercise habits, their times of meditation, disciplining the body, so that the mind might go free. All of these different ideas about how to become peaceful, or content, or good enough. The problem is, they always focus, (and humanity does this from Adam on), it always focuses upon what I can do. Well, if I do this, if I eat the fruit, I will know. If I meditate properly, I will know. If I do enough good works, I will finally know that I am good enough. If I do... It doesn't really matter what you put after, "If I do," it's all about what you are responsible for doing. The problem is, even if you make up your own rules, you can't even follow them. How many New Year's resolutions have we made? "I'm going to lose weight this year. I'm going to eat healthy. I'm going to do X, Y, and Z," whatever it might be. Are you able to be consistent in those? If you are, you're better than me, because I have failed visibly every single New Year's resolution that I make.

But it's more than just New Year's resolution of being a better person. It's about the sin and corruption that is in my life. I might be able to eat healthier and lose some weight. I might even be able to control my temper a little bit better than I have in the past. But I cannot, no matter how hard I try, I cannot get rid of my sin. I cannot find peace with God in my own strength. I am foolish and powerless before God. So much so, that maybe even I am nothing. God says that He uses those that are things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are. I have nothing. The only thing that I have that I can claim for myself is my sin, and God, in His grace, from nothing but His Word, creates faith in me, whole cloth by His own actions. He gives me faith. I had nothing, and yet He destroys that, which was in me, my sin, and He gives me the world. He gives me His presence. He gives me His hope. He gives me His salvation, even my own sanctification. I don't know if you noticed that at the end of Corinthians. So, the Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom, so our wisdom comes from Christ. Our righteousness, that we are righteous before God, comes from Christ. Our sanctification, being made holy, comes from Christ, and our redemption, our salvation comes from Christ.

So what are we called to do? What's our responsibility in this whole mess? "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." In other words, for all of this, all that He has done, it is our duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. That's it. He has done it all. This is what Jesus was telling John, when He came to be baptized. John doesn't know what's going on yet, fully, but Jesus says, "Let it be so now, for thus, it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." So John baptizes Jesus. John being the culmination of the Old Testament, baptizes Jesus. Basically, gives the mantle, gives the authority, gives the responsibility, of fulfilling the Law to Jesus, in our place, for all humanity. John brings the weight of the Law, the condemnation of all that has gone before, and the hope of all that has gone before, and places it upon Jesus in His baptism. Basically, passing the mantle from the old to the new. And so, Jesus takes on the Law. He takes on the responsibility for our lives and our salvation. That's what He is doing in His baptism, to fulfill all righteousness, not just His righteousness, but all righteousness, the righteousness of God that is given to us in our baptism as a gift, because He fulfilled it, starting with His baptism.

Now, again, John is in prison, not understanding what is going on here, and what does Jesus do? He points John to Isaiah. He points John back to the Old Testament and says, "Look, this is what the Old Testament said. I'm going to open the eyes that are blind and bring the prisoners out of the dungeon." And He adds, "also

bring to life those that are dead." He points to the Old Testament. He reminds John, "This is what we started in My baptism, and this is what I am going to finish on the cross," and He did, when He said those fateful words, "It is finished." That was finally the culmination. Let us fulfill all righteousness. He fulfilled it for us and gave it to us, even though we did not deserve it so that we might be holy and blameless before our God, so that we can hear that same voice from heaven. "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased."

See, God looks at each and every one of us, you and me, and He sees Christ when He sees us. So He considers us His beloved children. The God of the Old Testament, the God of the 10 Commandments, the God of the Law that demands perfection, the God who knows how often we have failed to live up to our own expectations, yet alone His. That same God considers us His beloved children for the sake of Christ. We, then, fulfill all righteousness from Christ to us in our own baptisms. That is where He gives us His righteousness, and that is where He adopts us as His children, and that is where He begins to see us, as He sees Christ, His beloved child. So take heart. Do not be afraid. Do not be concerned, or worried that you're not quite as wise, not quite as strong, not quite as noble as you wish you were. For Christ has chosen the weak, and the foolish, and the things that are not, and He has given us all things.

May His grace, and His mercy, and His peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.