

Advent IV

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[0 : 00] St. John the Baptist is the transitional figure from the old to the new. He was the last of the old covenant prophets.

When certain priests and Levites asked who he was, John answered, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.

John's ministry was to pave the way for the coming Messiah. His vocation as prophet and baptizer was one of preparation, calling people to repent and to prepare for the coming of their king.

But our Lord's coming was a bit confusing to most people in Israel, including John himself. We heard from Father Randall's excellent sermon last week that this prophet had questions and had doubts about our Lord and his ministry.

That is to be expected, as the Israelites believed, that when the Messiah came, all their enemies would be conquered and vanquished. They believed that their king would come in one great and mighty display of judgment, unleashing his fury upon all his enemies.

[1 : 28] He would then rule from Jerusalem in his holy temple, sitting upon David's throne forever, and his kingdom would never end.

And John assures those around him that he's not the Messiah. As a matter of fact, he says that he's not even worthy to untie our Lord's sandals.

In a couple of days, we will celebrate and we will sing of the coming of Jesus as we celebrate the holy nativity. Jesus being born in a manger in Bethlehem.

Although we are conditioned to think that there were shiny halos and bright lights, as heaven burst out into praise, it is more likely that our Lord was born in the most humble of circumstances, with little attention or recognition at all.

Our Lord was born, he was laid in a feeding trough for animals in a cave. And that very place of his birth sets the stage for his entire earthly ministry.

[2 : 37] You see, the people wanted a display of glory and great power. But what they saw instead was a boy that grew up and then was surrounded with a ragtag group of followers.

His congregation was made up of former thieves, prostitutes, those with various disabilities. You see, the people wanted Jesus to strike against their enemy, the Roman Empire.

They wanted Jesus to lead a rebellion against all their enemies. Jesus instead said things like, No, you're to pay taxes to the Roman Empire and you are to love your enemies.

Christmas is more than a pretty service and candlelight singing Silent Night. Although there is certainly nothing wrong with that.

We'll be doing that. But Christmas follows Advent. And Advent is that time where we are to do what John told his followers long ago.

[3 : 50] We are to repent.

Jesus came as a baby. Jesus walked among the people, welcoming the outcast and the stranger while calling out the hypocrisy of the religious class. Jesus was tempted.

Jesus was condemned by his peers. And Jesus died on a cross. And this humility and death of Jesus became a deal breaker for the people of Israel.

As they expected might and power, shock and awe, if you will. What they saw instead was the humiliation and death of a man who couldn't even save his own life.

They asked the question, How can this Jesus be our King and our Messiah? That was the stumbling block. That was the rejection of Jesus.

[5 : 13] The one who claimed to be the creator and God of the universe. Who had come into this world, born in obscurity. Who came in real flesh and blood.

We, however, know the full story. The baby that came in a manger was the sacrificial lamb for the sins of the world.

And that helpless man upon that cross would be raised from the dead. As he conquered death once and for all. Jesus is now the shepherd of his people.

And he rules and reigns over all creation. And our Lord's next visit. His next appearance. His next advent.

Will not be filled with obscurity and rejection. Our Lord's coming will be filled with majesty, glory, and judgment. And what John the Baptist and Israel hoped for.

[6 : 16] What they longed for. It will finally be made manifest. In the final advent. With the coming of our King, Jesus the Christ.

Therefore, we are called to be preparing. We are called to be preparing for the coming of our King. Repenting. As we anticipate to meet our Judge and our Lord.

But until that glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are called to live a life of humility. A life of faith.

A life of obedience. We, like our Lord, are to live lives of sacrifice. And service to others. Trusting in Christ, our Savior.

And we are to imitate St. John the Baptist. Following the path that has been blazed before us. Confessing Jesus as the Christ.

[7 : 16] And seeking to live our lives in conformity to the will of God. And we are to share our faith with others. Not shouting at people.

Not acting like crazy people. We are to share our faith. Giving people hope. In a world where so many have no hope.

We are to point people to Jesus. We are called to be the voices in the wilderness. Beckoning others to prepare to meet their God.

And how we make straight the way of the Lord. Is to live lives of faith, humility, and anticipation. Repenting and preparing to meet our coming King and Judge.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.