



The Man Who Pointed to Christ

Advent: Year B, Week 2

His name was divinely inspired. It was to be "*John*" (Luke 1:13). His endorsement came from Jesus, Himself (Matthew 11:11), and centuries before his birth, the prophet Isaiah foretold that his radical voice would cry out: "*In the wilderness prepare the way of YHWH; make straight in the desert a highway for our God*" (Isaiah 40:3).

His description is brief: clothed in camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, he ate nothing but locusts and wild honey (Mark 1:6). He performed no "*sign*," yet multitudes gravitated towards him, ratifying his message of Christ as true (John 10:41).

His mission encompassed just one word: "*Prepare.*" Nevertheless, the resounding phenomenon that is Christianity is nothing but a testimony to the success of the Baptist, who came with a most piercing message: "*Repent, for the Reign of God is at hand*" (Matthew 3:2).

SCRIPTURE

Mark 1:1-8

1 Here begins the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: **2** as it is written in Isaiah the Prophet: "I send my messenger before you to prepare your way, **3** the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of our God. Clear a straight path.'"

4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **5** The whole Judean countryside and all of the people of Jerusalem went out to John and were baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

6 John was clothed in camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and he ate nothing but locusts and wild honey.

7 In the course of his preaching, John said, "One more powerful than I is to come after me. I am not fit to stoop and untie his sandal straps. **8** I have baptized you with water, but the One to come will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

For all the readings for the Second Sunday of Advent click [here](#).

FOR REFLECTION

1. John the Baptist's lifestyle was as austere as his message. Is your life in sync with your message as an LGBTQ person or ally? Do seasons like Advent and Lent propel you to clarify your paths?
2. The Baptist was no puppet of the status quo. By confronting the hypocrisy of the religious establishment (Matthew 3:7) and the immorality of Herod (Mark 6:17-29), John spoke truth to power. As an LGBTQ person or ally, what steps, small or large, can you take in situations where your conscience might be in stark opposition to authority figures and immoral power? Have any larger social movements like Me Too, Black Lives Matter, Occupy, Cancel Culture, Women's March, Earth First, and others influenced or activated you? What else motivates you to act?
3. John the Baptist speaks about baptisms of water and Holy Spirit (often imagined as fire). Reflecting on your own baptism and confirmation, how do the elements of water and fire bring meaning to you this Advent? Can these symbols be applied to interpret LGBTQ history and spirituality, and/or the ecological signs of the times?
4. Today's gospel seems partial to the influence of men in its narrative (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Isaiah, John). The painting above, by Leonardo da Vinci, on the other hand, portrays John with fairly androgynous characteristics. Jean-Pierre Isbouts, in his article, "[Transgender Motifs in Leonardo's Art](#)" suggests that John's tilted head, long flowing hair, and downcast eyes filled with love and sorrow could perhaps be a "*deliberate allusion to Mary, the only other human being who loved Jesus without any qualification.*" How do you envision John the Baptist? How important is gender to you in appreciating the message and ministry of biblical/historical characters?
5. Do you see the wilderness of Advent as a place of absence or of presence? What is absent or present for you in this season? What blessings or hope do you seek, as you leave the wilderness to fulfill your vocation and ministry as an LGBTQ person/ally?

PRAYER

Psalm 85: 8-13

Let us see your mercy, God, and grant us your deliverance

I will hear what God proclaims;
a voice that speaks of peace; peace for your people,
so long as they don't return to their folly.
Your deliverance is near for those who revere you
and your glory will dwell in our land.

Let us see your mercy, God, and grant us your deliverance

Love and faithfulness shall meet;
Justice and mercy shall kiss.
Truth shall sprout from the earth,
and justice shall look down from heaven.

Let us see your mercy, God, and grant us your deliverance

God will give us what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.
Justice shall march before you,
and peace will prepare the path for your steps.

Let us see your mercy, God, and grant us your deliverance

