

### **“John the Baptist Forerunner”**

Last week, Jesus gives us two similar parables about the kingdom of God. This week, we learn about how John the Baptist was predestined from his mother’s womb to go before the Messiah to prepare His way. The Church only celebrate the birth of two saints, Mary’s and John the Baptist’s. All other Saints celebration occurs on the day they died.

Right in the womb of his mother, John was introduced to Jesus through the voice of Mary. On hearing Mary’s voice, John leaped in the womb of his mother and our Lord baptized him by filling him with the Holy Spirit as Zechariah was told by the Angel. John’s mission was to call the people of Israel to repentance before the beginning of the mission of the Messiah.

At the birth of John the Baptist, we heard that the people were afraid, they were in awe, and wondered about John’s identity by enquiring **“What, then, will this child be?”** We can only assume that some would have thought he was the Messiah even at his birth.

The birth of John signified the beginning of God’s mercy. It is to let God’s people know that God did not forget His promise of redemption after the ‘fall’ in the book of Genesis. John’s circumcision signified his connection to the Mosaic Law and connects him to his Jewish covenantal community. The circumstance that surrounded his naming, signified the breaking away from the Jewish priestly lineage of his father because he was not named after any member in his family.

John the Baptist was a man who was completely consumed with revealing who Jesus is to his people. As a matter of fact, we cannot think of John the Baptist without thinking of Jesus. Zeal for the Lord consumed John. He preached fearlessly about Him and warned his people that unless they had a change of heart and attitude they were heading for condemnation. He was a true disciple of Jesus.

We too have been called to be disciples of Jesus by our baptism. The calling is a privilege that should not be taken lightly. Jesus’ call to us is for us to be like John in spreading His Gospel. He expects us to be filled with zeal in fearlessly proclaiming His second coming to judge the living and the dead.

One of the big mistake of the Pharisees and Scribes of which Jesus reminded them of several times in the Gospel was, they only taught about the majesty, power, and glory of the Messiah while neglecting to teach about His simplicity, His suffering, His passion and death. It is as if they preached about what would sound good to their audience so the people will be attracted to them rather than be attracted to the truth.

We seem to have the same type of mentality among some preachers in our world today. ***‘It is the feel good era,’*** where preaching is limited to what people would like to hear. Things that would make them focus on this world and not the next. Instead of preaching only about God’s mercy, we need to hear also about God’s Judgement. Jesus requires us to obey His commandments so we can receive His mercy.

If we want to be disciples of Jesus our focus should be like the unselfish love of John the Baptist. His love as expressed in his preaching on repentance are about: concern for others in need, hospitality, faithfulness in marriage, detachment from the love of money, and our total reliance on God. Our lives as Christians might seem boring and uneventful to others, but all that matters is that they are pleasing to God.

If we compare the role of John the Baptist to that of present day preachers or clergy, preaching should reflect John's motto: that we must decrease while Jesus must increase. This means preaching and receiving what is needed to be saved as we have received it, rather than being salvation ourselves. Jesus' Gospel should be preached rather than our own gospel.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us resolve to believe in everything He taught His disciples that has been passed on to us.