

Witness for Jesus

John 1:6-8

BI: Just as John the Baptist came as a witness to the Light, so, we too, are given the privilege of proclaiming the excellencies of Christ.

Introduction:

One of the great privileges of the Christian life is that we get to tell people something glorious that they don't know; namely, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing they can find life in His name. And this is a privilege whose roots go all the way back to John the Baptist. He was the first true witness of Jesus Christ. In fact, that is the purpose for which He came.

The presentation of witnesses is a really important theme running through the Gospel of John. John the Baptist is only the first, but the Apostle John will present a total of eight (8) witnesses who appear in this Gospel to announce that Jesus is who He claimed to be. For example, in addition to John the Baptist there is the witness of the Father (5:37); Jesus' witness of Himself (8:18); His miracles (5:36; 10:25); the O.T. Scriptures (5:39); some of those who met Him (4:29); His disciples (15:27; 19:35; 21:24); and the Holy Spirit (15:26).

The word for "*witness*" in John is a legal term that means to "*testify*" as in a courtroom. Understand that the whole point of the Apostle John's Gospel is to establish the fact that Jesus - and no one else on earth - is the Son of God. In order to establish this fact, he brings in witness after witness.

Now, as we see in the text this morning, the first witness is John the Baptist. Listen to the apostle's words as he introduces this first witness (Read John 1:6-8).

I. John's Calling:

1. First of all, the apostle says that John the Baptist was sent from God. Now, of course anyone can claim that they have are on a mission from God, but John really was, and the people knew that. Let's spend a few minutes thinking about the uniqueness of this amazing man.

He fulfilled the O.T. prophecies regarding the Messiah's forerunner. Isaiah said that (Isa. 40:3) "A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.'" John the Baptist was this voice. Witness as well that the final O.T. prophet, Malachi, said that before the Day of the Lord, an Elijah-like prophet would come (Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6). John the Baptist fulfilled these prophecies.

Second, John was unique because his conception and birth were miraculous. Turn to Luke 1:5-7; 36. John's father, Zacharias, was a priest serving in the temple when the angel,

Gabriel, appeared to him to tell him the news (**Read 5-7, & 36**). And the people at the temple that day knew this happened (**Read v. 21-22**).

Third, John was unique because the angel told Zacharias that the coming child would indeed be the forerunner for Messiah (**read 8-17**).

Fourth, the H.S. filled Zacharias to prophecy concerning John (76-79).

John had an amazing **calling** that extended all the way back to be before he was born.

II. John's Influence:

1. Read v. John 1:7-8

2. John's ministry in Israel was huge! There had not been a true prophet in Israel for 400 years, so people were flocking to him by the thousands. And he was a different kind of preacher than what we are used to today. He certainly did not fit the mold of the stereotypical 21st century preacher. This was not the sweet, humble-sounding guy in the pulpit who couches his message with soft words that rarely offend. No, John was a fire-breathing preacher who rebuked the people and demanded that they repent. One of his most famous sermon lines was "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Mat. 3:7). *How's that for a culturally sensitive, inspirational, church-growth message?* In our day people would question whether such an insensitive guy like that could even be considered a Christian!

3. John's basic message was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In what sense was the kingdom of heaven at hand? Well, he was about to introduce Israel to their King. Jesus Christ, their Messiah. He was already in their midst. It won't be long until we get to v. 26 where the Baptist points to Jesus and declares, "*Behold, the Lamb of God!*"

4. John was a bold preacher. You will remember that John even rebuked King Herod for committing incest by marrying his brother's wife. But even that godless king had to acknowledge that John "was a righteous and holy man. And Mark tell us that when Herod heard him preach "he was very perplexed but enjoyed listening to him" (Mark 6:20).

5. The Jewish leaders were also impressed with John. They thought that maybe he was the Messiah, so they sent a delegation to Him to ask (read John 1:19-20).

6. In fact, so influential was the ministry of John the Baptist in Israel that decades later years later Paul bumped into some of his disciples who somehow had missed the fact that John had come to point men to Jesus.

7. It is also said that there were known to be disciples of John the Baptist into the second century. So in one respect, the Gospel of John was, in part, written to whatever disciples of John the Baptist were left so that they would come to a true knowledge of their Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

8. You see, John had an amazing calling, and became a man of great influence. But John also had a very clear goal.

III. John's Goal:

1. There was no ambiguity about what John had come to do. He preached so that men would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Verse 7 says that he came as a witness to testify about the Light (Jesus) so that all might *believe* through him.
2. And this should be our goal as well. All of us are given the amazing privilege to literally *witness* to people about the glory of Christ. What we have here in verses 7-8 is kind-of an outline of what made John witness great.
3. It is not as easy to detect in the English as it is in the Greek, but there are three parts to this outline. First, John says that the Baptist was not the Light. Second, John tells us he was sent to testify about the Light. And third, The Baptist testified so that men might believe through him.
4. Let's think about these just briefly. First, John the Baptist was not the Light. He will say so himself a couple of times in this chapter. In other words, John had an accurate appraisal of himself. He didn't come to make a name for himself. He didn't preach, teach, or witness so that people would be impressed with him. He was simply a "voice" crying in the wilderness. He had come to deliver a message, that was all. He was like a mailman who delivers messages *from* someone *to* someone. He is not the author of the message. He was not the creative genius behind the message. He was simply the deliverer of the message. That's how John saw himself.
5. On this point, Boice points out that "Whenever a Christian layman, minister, writer, teacher, or whoever it might be, gets to thinking that there is something important about him, he or she will always cease to be effective as Christ's witness. The testimony will stop" (*Gospel of John* p. 53).
6. Beloved, we need to be so careful when we share the gospel that people don't get the impression that we are promoting our selves, or our church, or denomination, or anything else. We witness purely to proclaim the excellencies of Christ. There's no room for pride, arrogance, or self-aggrandizement. We are merely mailmen delivering God's message.
7. Second, John bore witness about the light. This is important because we need to understand that we don't bring people to Christ simply by living godly lives before them. Sooner or later we have to speak. Sooner or later the gospel must roll off our tongues as we call people to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Clearly, some are more gifted for this task than others, but we are all called to witness for Christ as best we can, trusting that the Lord will use our feeble efforts to bring some to Christ.
8. Third, John witnessed believing that God would actually use him to bring others to faith in Christ. We are told that John bore witness of the light "that through him all men might believe." For some of us, when we tell someone else about Christ we do it very doubtfully. We have a hard time believing that God can actually use *us* to help others believe, and truly turn from darkness to light. But think about the people God used in the N.T. Think about the adulterous Samaritan woman (John 4) whose simple testimony brought an entire city to faith in Christ!

9. You see, you don't have to be a great preacher to be a witness to Christ. Just stay humble, speak the truth as God gives you opportunity, and believe that God and actually use you to bring others to saving faith. That's what John did, and we can learn much from him.

BI: Just as John the Baptist came as a witness to the Light, so, we too, are given the privilege of proclaiming the excellencies of Christ to everyone we know.