

JUNE 16, 2024 Father's Day FPCPH SERMON: Many Johns—Many Roles

Scripture: John the Baptist—Matthew 3: 1-6; Matthew 3: 13-17;

Disciple John—Matthew 4: 18-22; John 19: 26-27

INTRODUCTION

For those of you who have not been with us in the last two Sundays—or you are just now coming back to the Beach Service. Welcome! For the month of June we are in a **Preaching Series called: “Names—Same but Different.** Some times when we read the Bible there are so many names that are the same, that we get confused. So, to cut down on the chaos, we are into learning about different people in the Bible with the same name but who express their faith, in different ways, just as we do.

NAMES

Two weeks ago, we looked at the many Marys in the Bible; Last week it was the Josephs in the Bible who grabbed the spotlight. Today it is those people who are named John.

JOHNS IN THE BIBLE Just a tidbit of information to keep you mind rolling. Sometimes we call the toilet, a john. Does anyone know why? It is because Sir John Harrington from Britain, was the inventor of the forerunner of the first flushing toilet. It is only fitting that his first name should be synonymous with the toilet. Really? Just what I would want—to be associated with the toilet. Now that you are totally distracted by these comments, here are some serious facts about the name John in the Bible-

No, John does not mean toilet in the Bible. Rather the Hebrew rendition of the name John is: “graced by God. Or favored by God.”

“John” is a solid, traditional name that exudes strength, responsibility, and kindness.

Remember that, as we look at the two Johns we will highlight today—John the Baptist— (How appropriate since we have just baptized a child), and Disciple John the Beloved, (also appropriate because infant baptism is all about God claiming that child as His own. God loves that child even before the child knows it and can claim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior).

OTHER JOHNS IN THE BIBLE

There are very few Johns in the Old Testament. There are many Johns in the period of time when Jesus was alive. Why? Because John was a very popular name with the Jewish people— (some say that 5% of the men were named John, around the time of Jesus.) We have five Johns who are highly specified in the New Testament in Jesus’ time and in the early church: John the Baptist (He is a cousin of Jesus); John the Beloved (He is a Disciple of Jesus); John the Father of Simon Peter, the disciple.

(often when Peter is mentioned, it says: “son of John.”) John Mark, one of the leaders in the Early Church. John, son of Annas, who was a ruler of the Jewish Law when the early church was just beginning. (Acts 4: 6) Those 5 Johns are the most familiar in the Scripture. However, today we are only going to concentrate on two of them: John the Baptist and John the Beloved Disciple.

FATHER’S DAY

Since it is Father’s Day, I think it would be appropriate to tell you that with both John the Baptist and John the Beloved Disciple, we know their Fathers (and their mothers),.

John the Baptist—Father and Mother are Zechariah and Elizabeth. It is, through an angel, that God tells father Zechariah about the birth of his son, and about Elizabeth’s pregnancy. If you want to know more about Zechariah’s experience you will have to open up your Bible to the first chapter of Luke to get the full fascinating story. The angel says to Zechariah, and to us: “He (John, his son) will be great in the sight of the Lord. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit. Many of the people of Israel he will bring back to the Lord their God. He will make ready the people for the coming of the Lord (in Jesus Christ).”

JOHN THE BELOVED DISCIPLE OF JESUS

His father is Zebedee, as we heard in the Scripture reading for today. We also know from church tradition that his mother’s name is Salome—she is mentioned as one of the women at tomb of Jesus’ resurrection. The neat thing about Zebedee and his two sons, John and James—is that they have a family fishing business. When John and James are called by Jesus to follow Him, Zebedee does not stop them, even though there is work to do in mending the nets in their fishing business. It says in Scripture: “Immediately James and John left the boat, left their father, and followed Jesus.”

Father Zebedee let them go. Question: How often do we look at the work we are doing and ignore the call of God—the call of Jesus—on our life or on the lives of those around us?

BOTH FATHERS RAISE SONS

Both Fathers Zechariah and Zebedee RAISE sons (children) who LOVE God, Who LISTEN to God’s voice when God calls, so that they (their sons) might SHARE Jesus Christ amidst their life’s work, **Question: How often do we neglect to teach our sons—and daughters about the love of God and OUR faith—our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ?** Just so you know—Both John the Baptist and John the Beloved Disciple come to know God, not just as Father but as Abba which really means Daddy—they have an intimate relationship with the God they trust,

(Tidbit—there is nothing in scripture to tell us that either one of them were fathers—we just don’t know)

A FEW WORDS ABOUT JOHN THE BAPTIST

It is so appropriate for us to be talking about John the Baptist today because at the Traditional Worship, we (will) baptize Allison Laurel Laidlaw who is an infant). Preaching and Baptizing is the ministry to which John the Baptist is called. Now John is not baptizing infants—He is baptizing adults, which we do also. We not only baptize infants, but also young people and adults. As Presbyterians we sprinkle water, (water on their head) we pour water (like the Catholics often do) and we immerse (like Baptist almost always do). Baptism is symbolic of the “washing away of sins”—the dying to self (particularly in immersion—showing that the person (adult) has repented of their sins and wants to follow Jesus for the rest of their life. Old Life dying; the New Life emerging. Certainly, John the Baptist calls people to “repent” and strongly preaches “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”—that is, Jesus is here.

I try to preach that also. (even though I am not like John the Baptist— I don't wear camel's hair or a leather belt and I certainly don't eat locusts—But yea, I do eat honey (being Beekeeper). I try to tell you every Sunday morning and even during the week:

“Wake up—the best way of life is to leave behind the life of temptation and sin—

Confess and repent of those things—And follow Jesus—your life will be blessed (I guarantee it) with overwhelming strength, joy and peace, if you commit, your life, first and foremost, to God in Jesus Christ.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Many of you know that I am a part of Interdenominational Bible Study group that meets on Wednesday nights in our Parlor. We are talking about Rob Bell's book, “Love Wins” which covers the subjects of heaven and hell. A few weeks ago, I confessed to that group, I don't share Jesus Christ to help people go to heaven and not to hell (that is God's expertise in what happens after death) **I share Jesus Christ with people, so that this life—right here and now would be better.** I really believe that John the Baptist felt the same way. He knew Jesus was coming and was already here— John the Baptist was **preparing the way for Jesus to have sway in the lives of those people that John the Baptist touched.** They needed to look at their lives, confess, repent and turn towards God to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. As John the Baptist says: “I baptize you with water but the One who comes after me will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

TWO QUALITIES IN JOHN THE BAPTIST

There are two qualities in John the Baptist that we would do well to emulate.

He told the Truth. He was Humble. **John the Baptist told the Truth about the Kingdom of God and about Jesus**—Sometimes it is not the easiest life. Sometimes he said things that people didn't like to hear. But John the Baptist was bold (which got him into trouble—(slit throat) John the Baptist, though, knew what he was doing and knew that he was to Preach and Baptize, for the kingdom of God.

Jesus says of John the Baptist: **“He is the greatest prophet.”** Not because of the way he looked or the way he spoke, but because his heart was in the right place—completely Sold Out for Jesus— God's Only Son, Beloved, with whom God was well pleased.” as we read in Scripture today at the baptism of Jesus. **And because John the Baptist was humble.** It was not about him- it was all about Jesus. He says: “I am not even worthy to untie his sandal.” He knows Jesus is so much more important than he is.

Question for all of us: “Is our heart in the right place for God to use us to share Jesus Christ, and to build His Kingdom, right here, right now? (You know what we pray every Sunday, In the Lord's Prayer: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.)

JOHN THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

Now a few words about John the Beloved Disciple. John the Beloved Disciple was not a preacher or baptizer, but in a way, he was a preacher It was through the movement of his pen. **John the Beloved Disciple, was most likely the writer of the Gospel of John,** there is some question whether he wrote the three letters titled **1,2,3 John** (perhaps they were written by some of the

students under him), and it is certainly assumed that he wrote the **Book of Revelation**—(that is a whole other study in its own right.)

To understand the personality and fine qualities of John the Beloved Disciple, I want to concentrate on the Gospel of John. It is a very different Gospel, compared to Matthew, Mark and Luke.

But it is within the Gospel of John that John never refers to himself as John but as John—the Beloved or as we read this morning: at the crucifixion, it says: “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” In particular, John is in the inner circle of Jesus disciples, witnessing the Transfiguration, the raising from the dead, Jarius’ daughter.; John was the beloved disciple at the Last Supper who leans over and asks Jesus who will betray him. John is the only disciple who is at Crucifixion of Jesus—at the foot of the cross. **All the other 11 disciples are martyred in that period of the early church. But it is John lives into old age;** (Perhaps to take care of Mary and to write the Gospel, letters and Book of Revelation. We don’t know.) He also ran to the tomb with Peter after the Resurrection of Jesus. What we do know is that **John calls himself beloved or “whom Jesus loved”** not to say that he was more loved than anyone else in the Group of Disciples or for that matter, Above any of us. I don’t think he does it being egotistical. I think that John, who calls himself “the Disciple whom Jesus loved,” knows without a doubt, that God in Jesus Christ deeply loves him, and he points out to all of us—God deeply loves You—each one of you!. And when John claims that— When we claim that “God loves me.” (Jesus loves me).that very thought colors everything else in life—how we treat ourselves and how we treat other people. Jesus says: “Love your neighbor—As you love yourself.” That all comes from knowing that God loves me. Jesus loves me. Wouldn’t we all like to know deep in our souls, I am deeply loved by the Father God, our lives would change—our world would change and Jesus Christ would have His way with us. **To end the sermon, I have three thoughts:**

First, I have a joke about Baptism:

There was a family who went to church and there was an infant baptism that day. There were two brothers in the family. When they got him, they went outside to play, even though it had been raining and there were lots of puddles in the potholes of the road.

The mother came out to check on the two boys and saw the older boy holding the younger boy’s head down in a puddle pothole. She screamed: “What are you doing?” He replied, “I am baptizing my brother—in the name of the Father, the Son and in the Hole He Goes.”

Second, when each talk is ended at the Pilgrimage Renewal Weekend, which I have encouraged each of you to attend,. each speaker says at the end: **“I love you. God loves you. And there is nothing you can do about it!” Remember that.**

Third, and also let us end by singing together, a song that many of us, including myself, learned when we were children: **“Jesus loves me. This I know”** John, the Beloved Disciple was sure of that in his life. We can be sure of that also.