**A Voice of One Crying Out in the Wilderness**

***19****And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”****20****He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”****21****And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”****22****So they said to him, “Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”****23****He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”*

***24****(Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.)****25****They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”****26****John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know,****27****even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.”****28****These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. (John 1:19-28, ESV)*

 John the Baptist opened the way for our Lord Jesus’ plan to advance – our calling is not that different than the above.

Greetings to you dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we speak today about “voice – in other words, about voices that call out. John the Baptist performed an important role in the plan of Christ. He became the way-maker – the one who set up the entrance of the Lord into public life. He readied the atmosphere and spoke truth while in a crooked and corrupt society. Today’s topic is exactly the latter and its connection with our walk with the Lord today as Jesus-followers. Again, John the Baptist opened the way for our Lord Jesus’ plan to advance – our calling is not that different than the above. Having said that,

We, as followers of Jesus, are called to facilitate peoples’ repentance and encounter with Christ just like the Baptist. John had a particularly complex job to do. The Lord had called him to be a voice, but not to guide people to himself, but to God. He lived in an interesting reality within the society of the Holy Land at the time. Everybody had an idea about the salvation of the Messiah and Israel. Many were expecting that at any moment, the Savior was going to reveal Himself. Because of that, Pharisaic Levites and priests were paying attention to what John was preaching and doing. Both because of his speeches, e.g., his judgment expressions as well as his baptismal activities, they intended to interrogate him to better understand his motive and identity.

For us, it is important to realize that John’s answers to the questioning was humble, truthful, and Messiah-centered. He knew who he was. He knew that he was simply a voice for the Lord, and even if the leaders did not know him, it was his job to be that voice until the Lord’s plan reached a certain threshold. He also knew just how much greater the coming Savior was than he. Again, and said simply, he knew who he was, and who Jesus was. And this truth kept him both in a right approach and understanding of his own mission.

The Lord Jesus is the greatest example of someone who knew what his mission was, and of someone who did it humbly. The Lord did not need to suffer on our behalf – He did not need to allow the temple guards to arrest him; He did not need to listen to constant insults at his person for his years of ministry. He did not need to find himself in front of potential traps laid by religious leaders. Despite all the above, however, He knew that He was called to effect salvation on all humankind. His calling was to pay the price for sin for all people. And to whatever He was called to do, He remained faithful. How humiliating and painful must that have been for Him!

Today, each of us as believers are called to call those around us to the Lord’s path just like John. People need to hear the Good News of the Lord, and the unrepentant masses need to hear about the Lord’s fearful wrath awaiting them if they do not turn from their ways. We are called both to call people to repentance as well as to walking the Lord’s path. Just as John always considered Jesus higher than himself, we also are called to lift up Jesus. Just as he invited people to live a pure life in word and deed, we also are called to invite the unbelievers around us to the same. Each of us has a mission to accomplish like John the Baptist’s.

May God give us that awareness, so that we do not shrink back, but rather that we always pursue His mission for us. We, as followers of Jesus, are called to facilitate peoples’ repentance and encounter with Christ just like the Baptist. John the Baptist opened the way for our Lord Jesus’ plan to advance – our calling is not that different than the above.