

4/26/20 - John 1:19-34 - "Messenger of Hope"

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[0 : 00] Let's turn our Bibles to John chapter 1, verse 19. We're going to be, but as you're turning, I want to talk about, I love talking about C.S. Lewis and his, especially his masterpiece writing in the Chronicles of Narnia.

And there was a Narnian hymn, like a little rhyme in the Chronicles of Narnia, which goes a little something like this. It says, wrong will be right when Aslan comes in sight.

At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more. When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death. And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.

When Peter, Lucy, and Edmund, and Lucy, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy all came into Narnia through that wardrobe.

This land had been dark and cold for a hundred years. And this was a time where this land in Narnia felt that there was no hope at all.

[1 : 15] And these children, actually coming through the wardrobe, served a vital role in fulfilled prophecy in this storyline that C.S. Lewis wrote. But the problem was that they themselves weren't the hope that was to come.

This rhyme pointed towards something forward, somebody coming named Aslan, who would deliver this dark, cold land.

And today, we're going to meet a similar figure to what the role of those children played in this storyline. And today, his name is John the Baptist.

And he is known as a messenger of hope in the storyline. A messenger of hope. And not just fulfillment of prophecy.

But his role was to point people forward to what was to come. So please turn with me. I'm assuming you guys are there.

[2 : 24] John 1, verse 19. As we'll continue the account of John the Baptist. Let's identify the significance of who he is. But also the one of whom he testifies about in the narrative.

And see how it impacts us today. So please join us in John, chapter 1, verse 19. It reads, and this is the testimony of John.

When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? He confessed and did not deny, but confessed, I am not the Christ.

And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? He said, I am not. Are you a prophet? He said, he answered, No.

And they said to him, Who are you? We have to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself? He said, I am the voice of one calling out in the wilderness.

[3 : 33] Make straight the way of the Lord. As the prophet Isaiah said. Now they have been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, Then why are you baptizing?

If you are neither the Christ nor Elijah nor the prophet. John answered them, I baptize you with water, but among you stands one you do not know.

Even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie. These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me comes a man who ranks before me because he was before me.

I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water that he might be revealed to Israel. And John bore witness.

[4 : 41] I saw a spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, He on whom you see the spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God. Please join me in a word of prayer this morning.

Father, we come to you and we're asking you for help to study your word and to not just to observe some dated history from 2,000 years ago, but Father, a transcendent word that is alive, that is active, it's perfect, and it is profitable in our lives in so many different ways.

Father, let us experience that today as we see this account and see, by the help of your Holy Spirit, see how it impacts us in our lives. And we praise in Jesus' precious and holy name.

Amen. So we see day one here. We're going to split this up, not in points, but in rather days, because we have two significant days in this text.

[6 : 07] And the first day we see preparing the world to receive. I'm assuming that everybody has their Bibles open with them at this time.

This text starts out saying that this is the testimony of John. When the Jews send priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who are you? They ask a first question in this text.

It's sort of like a traffic stop that these Jews and these Jewish priests and Levites embark on. They come to inquire down at the Jordan of what all this commotion is about.

And they have, just like any traffic stop, they ask you who you are and what you're doing. We haven't gotten to that point in our quarantine, our nationwide quarantine yet.

We don't have the National Guard pulling us over. But this kind of seems as if it's a traffic stop. Who are you? What are you doing? Considering the context of this scene and John with the priests at this time and this day, it's kind of like those dark days in Narnia.

[7 : 16] At this point in biblical history, all was dark in the narrative. Yeah, Christ was born, but still all was dark. There was static on the radio between mankind and God.

It has been 400 years since the prophetic era had ended in the Old Testament. And John made quite a prophetic-like scene this very day, which got the attention of these Jewish priests.

And we see in verse 20, there was an adamant confession. And I don't want to miss John's response here as being significant, because he says he confessed and did not deny, but confessed.

I am not the Christ. The word seems a little needlessly repetitive, doesn't it? It kind of doesn't make sense. He confessed and did not deny, but confessed.

It seems confusing, a little bit jumbled. I mean, if you go to the original Greek, it gets even more confusing. But after quite an extensive word search, I'm like, there's got to be something here.

[8 : 24] Usually when you see something that seems confusing or unclear, you kind of dig into Scripture a little bit. And I dug deep into this. I'm like, there's got to be something here.

The point in John's confession is not necessarily the words that he uses, but rather it's their order or their structure.

This Greek structure of words conveys the strongest possible method in their language to express emphasis in his confession.

So we know that those who heard his response were aware of such a usage, understanding the emphasis he was trying to communicate with.

And John was drawing the line of his role in the biblical storyline. And where most may seek to steal the glory, start their own campaign, John denied it completely.

[9 : 34] Rightfully so. These inquisitive Jewish priests were investigating this guy baptizing Jews. The priests were masters of the Torah, known for memorizing the Old Testament.

They were very smart and intellectual men. They were men of the Word. And they're asking, they're inquiring of John, John the Baptist.

They asked him several questions. Are you the Christ? In verse 19. Verse 21, they ask him, Are you Elijah? Are you a prophet?

These priests were probably scouring their mental Old Testament archives and considering possibly a fulfillment of the prophecy that Malachi wrote about.

In Malachi 4.5, where he said, Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet. Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. So rightfully so.

[10 : 36] Maybe they're wondering, is this Elijah? Or maybe they're looking through their mental filing cabinets of their Old Testament knowledge and all of the scripture they have memorized.

And they pulled out of their mind, and they see possibly Deuteronomy 18. Or Deuteronomy 18.15. Where Moses announced that a prophet like me would be coming.

Maybe they think that he's a prophet. Or maybe it's just simply that Elijah and John bared some kind of resemblance to one another. John is described in Matthew 3 as a guy wearing a camel hair garment with a leather belt around his waist.

And you know, Elijah is always recorded as being a hairy man. I don't know. Who knows what could have been going through. But all they knew, these priests coming down that were sent from the Pharisees, all they know is that this guy is not qualified to be doing what he is doing.

These priests were gravely mistaken in their theology. However, John was a type of Elijah, but in a symbolic sense, not a literal physical sense, but in symbolic sense.

[11 : 59] Because we know that Elijah foreshadowed John's coming in the biblical storyline. And so they kind of give him a last warning in verse 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? So many questions from these priests, and they're getting nowhere.

So think about the essence of their questioning. Do you think their reasoning of questioning John, baptizing Jews is out of genuine interest or potential accusation building?

At this point, it's unclear. And falling short of anything that would make sense to these priests, these inquiring priests have exhausted their Old Testament archives, their mental archives.

They've scoured the scripture with one another. They're literally left scratching their heads at this point. And then coming to the point of this whole passage, the climax of this passage, John reveals his identity, and in so doing reveals the identity of the coming Messiah.

- [13 : 13] Look at me with verse 23. It says, 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.
- John opens his mouth, and John literally, out of his mouth comes the words of the prophet Isaiah. And then verse 24, obviously it makes clear that these men were taken back by this statement.
- And it also understands that what these men were sent for was accusation building because they were Pharisees. It's kind of like a little interlude in the story to bring to light who these priests were.
- John's words are significant here. I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.
- These were words, church, of preparation. And that is precisely what this particular baptism was geared towards.
- [14 : 24] It was the baptism of preparation. There are definitely similarities in the baptism of this baptism of preparation, which also is known as the baptism of repentance.
- But there are some similarities between that baptism and the baptism we see today. But there are very significant distinctions. because this was an Old Testament baptism.
- It was rooted in Old Testament history, cultural history. And because up to this point, the new covenant of the believer's baptism wasn't instituted yet.
- You see, biblical theology does truly matter because we have to understand that what he was doing was still falling short of what Jesus instituted for the church. There is a line being drawn here.
- And so the problem rests in that this is actually meant for the Jewish people to get baptized, to make themselves clean.
- [15 : 30] According to Old Testament ritual, God gave a command to the Jews and John's baptism was executed in light of its Old Testament origin. This was a baptism of preparation.
- And so these Jews, at this point, knowing what he's doing, what he's claiming, they're taken back.
- Who do you think you are? Verse 25, they say, they asked him, then why are you baptizing? If you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet.
- These men were not curious the least bit. Obviously threatened and offended that anyone would be baptizing the Jewish people.
- This guy's an imposter. He's a complete loon. He's not qualified to do this. Oh, wait till we get back to Jerusalem. This is where the rubber meets the road, church.
- [16 : 33] And potentially, the reason why these Jewish priests were sent to inquire what was happening, because what John was doing, according to their tradition, was completely insulting.
- By John baptizing the Jews, he was making a statement that the Jews need to repent and be washed of their sins and submit to this Old Testament ritual of cleansing, this baptism of preparation.
- You could imagine that these priests were probably thinking that this guy is off his rocker. Who is this guy? He's not one of us. Funny side story.
- There is a real syndrome for people who travel to the Holy Lands that they often experience. It's something real known as Jerusalem syndrome.
- Jerusalem syndrome. And that's when people who go to visit the Holy Lands and they're in Bethlehem, they're in Jerusalem, and they're walking the streets that Jesus walked and experiencing all this firsthand.

[17 : 50] Well, Jerusalem syndrome is something that these tour guides are aware of. It's when these people are completely starting to lose it. They're starting to show signs that they're about to go off their rocker.

There's subtle signs that these tour guides are made aware of. usually when people are within a group and then you see some people straying outside of their group, that's like a red flag for these tourists, these tour guides, that they have to get the Jerusalem syndrome people to, okay, we need to go and check these people, make sure that they're not losing it.

Because people would go to the Western Wall claiming that they are God, that they are the new Christ, that they have this new spiritual enlightenment. Jerusalem syndrome.

It's very fascinating to look at and quite sad knowing that it does occur. So you can imagine seeing this scene, looking down and seeing all these people, seeing this guy who's not qualified, he's not Christ, Elijah, or a prophet going to baptize Jewish and Gentile people.

These priests were probably wondering, is this guy suffering from Jerusalem syndrome? Feeling enlightened, he's not qualified. But John is obviously not a crazy religious nut.

[19 : 14] And where most individuals would suffer from Jerusalem syndrome, John takes all the attention off of himself. Where most of us would fail saying, I baptize with water, in verse 26, but among you stands one you do not know.

Even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal, I am unworthy to untie. Man, think about what he's saying here. Man, John could create quite a campaign of followers, couldn't he?

He could have said, like, yeah, you know, I am Elijah, you know? Yeah, I'll give you some, you know, download our app and make online donations, you know, you'll be blessed by that.

But no, John actually reinforces his credentials, but in the lack thereof, by using a Jewish idiom with the sandals.

John was essentially saying, I am nobody, I'm less than a slave. Thinking back to our Judges series of the Micah and the Levites, thinking back to that, of how they built their own kingdom and took all the glory for themselves and they were using what they had to testify that God was blessing them.

[20 : 35] John stripped himself of any credentials. He was unworthy. Less than a slave, in fact. And these priests were blind, absolutely blind.

Regardless of their scriptural insights, regardless of all the Torah that they had memorized going into the ministry, they were blind at the good news that this small interaction proposed.

Isn't this what echoed the words of John earlier last week, John 1, 9 through 11, where it says, the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

He was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own and his own people did not receive him.

John literally reduced himself to that of a crumb on the floor and drawing attention off of himself. He's essentially saying, don't look at me, it's not about who I am.

[21 : 47] Look at the one coming after me, you blind Pharisees. Remember last week we talked about the easel and the masterpiece that rests upon the easel and the significance in the masterpiece and not necessarily the easel.

The masterpiece that rests on the easel essentially brings value to that easel. An easel, there is nothing significant about an easel. It's a couple pieces of wood fastened together but the easel's role is to uphold, to position the masterpiece in a way that it is easy to view, it's easy to observe and to broadcast the work of the painter.

And John probably had that similar role of an easel. He had no significance. If it weren't for the masterpiece that rested upon him, that was coming after him, he could have just been firewood.

That could have served even greater of a purpose than a fastened piece of wood that creates some sort of tripod with nothing on it. The masterpiece brought significance to the easel but the easel was not significant in and of itself.

And don't we share a similar mission upon this earth? And I could tell you one thing clear is that the world today needs more easels and less forged masterpieces.

[23 : 16] The world needs more easels. I mean, this is the whole entire existence of Youngstown Metro Church is to glorify God and point to Jesus.

Everything that we do in our personal lives is to point to Jesus, our words to point to Jesus, our actions to point to Jesus.

It's never to steal God's glory but to give him glory, to point people to glorify Jesus. We must bear witness, church, and know who we are in Christ so that when the world comes to praise you and possibly, man, you have a happy marriage.

I wish I had what you had, you know, an unbeliever might say. Or they might say, you're always just so calm and put together. I just love how you're completely in solace or possibly how your people are gentle towards one another.

You're just so kind. What is it with you? May our same reply in our tone to those inquiring about who we are, reducing ourselves to being less than a crumb on the floor and saying, worthy is the lamb.

[24 : 37] Glory to God. I am unworthy in and of myself. Anything that I have is because of Jesus Christ. Let's not steal his glory. All I am is because of Christ.

All you are on the live stream even sitting here today is because of Christ. Glory to God alone. You are a messenger of hope.

A hope that came and is coming again. He lived a sinless life, suffered and died a sinner's death and rose again from the dead.

Believe in this. Don't believe me. And don't steal his glory in this. So let's check in with John on the following day in this text and see what exactly he is speaking about and meet the one who John was unworthy to untie his sandals on day two.

The arrival of the Lamb of God. It says in verse 29, the next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[25 : 55] This is he of whom I said, after me a man who ranks before me after me comes a man who ranks before me because he was before me.

I myself did not know him but for this purpose I came baptizing with water that he might be revealed to Israel. John says in verse 29, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Takes away the sin of the world. John was a man who was not naive to the role of sacrifice in the temple.

His father was known to be a priest who played a vital role in the sacrificial system. So you can imagine being a young John, John the Baptist, watching his father come home from work, possibly having blood stains on his clothing.

He understood what this sacrificial system meant and he knew very clear what he was saying. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[27 : 15] John with John having his readers focused upon this mysterious person coming after him, Jesus approaches John and he quickly identifies him as the Lamb of God.

Identifying him with sacrifice, but not only sacrifice, but also substitution, also satisfaction, removing sin, a necessary account of sin.

sin. So I want to take you through three quick verses, through two verses in Hebrews, to show you that this is not my own opinion. This is the Bible telling us absolute truth.

Hebrews 9.22 talks about blood being necessary for sin. If sin abounded, blood had to abound.

It says blood must be shed for sin to be forgiven. And then Hebrews 10.4 talks about a pardon.

[28 : 19] But it was a limited pardon. That what John is saying in this passage that behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, we know that their sacrificial system was limited in Hebrews 10.4.

It says for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. And then looking forward even into John's epistle in 1 John, if you can recall the series, this is the good news of Jesus Christ.

Where he writes in his epistle, you know, or his letter, sorry, you know that he appeared in order to take away sins.

And in him there is no sin. Here, John baptizes Jesus. Jesus comes walking towards him, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And we see here the Lamb of God, fully God, clothed in humanity, submitting himself to every requirement of God's law for Israel.

[29 : 32] Even baptism of preparation, baptism of repentance. Now, this might sound a little bit odd, but this by no means meant that Jesus Christ was unclean.

He was perfect walking into the water, he was the same perfect walking out of the water. He is fully God. This by no means meant that Jesus was unclean, but by him doing this, fulfilling this Jewish custom, this Old Testament custom of baptism, he was fulfilling all righteousness.

And in the midst of this event, of the divine Lamb of God identifying with the Jewish nation in baptism, we see all three persons of the Trinity testifying, proclaiming the Lamb of God of who this Jesus really is.

We see an ordination like ceremony here. John bore witness in verse 32. I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove and it remained on him.

I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, he on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain.

[30 : 57] This is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And John says, and I have seen and I have bore witness that this is the Son of God.

He has seen, he's bore witness. This is no ordinary moment in history, church. This is no ordinary ordination ceremony.

not just any man, but this is the Son of Man. God the Father testifies here.

The Spirit of God testifies here. Jesus himself testifies. I am doing something new for mankind.

The one whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. Obviously, what was unclear to John prior, he said he did not know him.

[32 : 06] He knew without a doubt as he witnessed the third person of the Trinity descend from heaven like a dove upon Jesus as heaven met earth at this time.

I have seen, John says, I have borne witness, this is the Son of God in verse 34. Yeah, take that to the bank blind Pharisees.

This is the Son of God. It's not about me, it's about him. Question him because those are questions worth answering. Jesus Christ is again identified as the Son of God.

He's the second Adam. You know, the first Adam brought death and darkness upon mankind from his rebellion to God. This is the second Adam, the true and better Adam, who brought humanity life and light.

This ordination ceremony which launched Jesus' earthly ministry as being the Christ, meaning that he is the anointed one, the one whom the Spirit descended and remained.

[33 : 19] And Jesus Christ is not only the coming one in verse 27, but Jesus was the dwelling one of who would baptize in a way which his Holy Spirit will one day be poured out and dwell.

This is a moment of preparation to prepare people for the one who not only walks among them who they fail to see, but also the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

Think about the implications of this verse. Think about the implications of this point in biblical history at this river. For 400 years since the close of the Old Testament, the entire nation of Israel was awaiting God to pour out.

There had been testimonies, there had been prophecies of old saying that God is going to pour out his spirits. There's something coming. Just wait.

Man, we as Americans can barely wait for these shipment delays at this time of virus and COVID-19. What? Amazon two-day shipping?

[34 : 33] We can't get that? It seems odd. And even some people get flustered and frustrated to the point of canceling an order and just going to another store.

For 400 years this nation was waiting to see what God would do. Just as what it was prophesied in Isaiah 44, God pouring his spirit out, Ezekiel 37 and Joel 2.

This is a new era and it's all about Jesus. this baptism of the Holy Spirit is what brings to light what exactly God the Father was preparing his people for.

That just as Jesus dwelled among his people, Jesus would not remain with his people, but he would be resurrected and be seated at the right hand of God. But he would send his spirit to dwell within man because we need a helper.

His spirit would dwell within us to help and to comfort, to guide us, to empower us. This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. At the moment a believer believes in Jesus Christ, accepts him, yields to him and the truth of his word, they are baptized with the Holy Spirit and sealed until the day of receiving that inheritance.

[35 : 55] And this baptism of the Holy Spirit, this dwelling of the Holy Spirit is important, it's significant to give us new desires, to give us a new nature to identify us as God's people, children of God.

It empowers us, it brings us life, comforts and guides us. This makes all the difference in the Christian life. God the Father was preparing mankind for the way of salvation, for the way of the cross, the Lamb of God.

God the Father. And this day, the second day in this narrative, marked the beginning of preparing as well, as Jesus Christ was preparing the people on earth for the cross.

And even today, Jesus' ministry continues by the power of his Holy Spirit which brings sinners into forgiveness and equips the saints to glorify God the Father.

Friends, are we prepared for this? Are we prepared for this? When I think of preparation, the only thing that comes to my mind is a wedding day.

[37 : 20] I think back upon my own wedding day, the preparation that took place of just even trying to find a venue, trying to find the date, trying to figure out which aunt and uncle we don't want to invite.

No, I'm just kidding. But just figuring out what we wanted for our wedding day to prepare. Picking out flowers, my wife picking out her gown.

And even the day of that wedding, there was still preparation going on. there were nerves, there were emotions. Getting your hair right, getting your makeup right, obviously that's for my wife, not me.

But maybe the hair. I think I had short hair at that time. That was about nine years ago now. But you're rehearsing your vows. There's even the day of that wedding, you're preparing yourself for this.

We're not unknown to preparation, are we? And the reality of Jesus coming back again for his bride, known as the church, the body of people, not buildings, Jesus Christ isn't coming back for a building, the church, meaning people.

[38 : 42] He can come back any moment. So just as we prepare almost obnoxiously in our own human efforts, are we prepared for this wedding day? when the groom will come for his bride, the church?

Are you prepared to meet the Son of God as He approaches you out of the crowd? Spending so much time preparing for things in life, are you prepared for Jesus?

Because sanctification is about progress and all these things that you know that I say, but sanctification is also about preparation. To know the God of whom we are adoring, but also making us known to Him.

So many questions today, aren't there? By these Pharisees. And they're only going to continue in this series. The accusations will increase.

Lots of questions. And sometimes it's valuable to know the right questions in life to ask. For these Pharisees, it was not who John was, but actually who Jesus was.

[39 : 52] That would be a proper inquiry for them to ask. And might this text beg a good question for us today? Do we know the One who John was glorifying in this text?

Do we know the One, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world? Have we experienced His forgiveness in our lives?

And even further, the best question that we may ask ourselves is not necessarily, do we know Him? That is very important, but even better yet, does Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, know us?

Does Jesus know you? I want you to reflect on that over the coming days as we close in prayer. each visit the ■■■■