

### III ADVENT 2016

#### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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*1 COR. 4.1 ST. MATT. 11.2*

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“Tell us, Jesus. Are you the one John said was going to come, or should we expect someone else?”

The main character in today’s and next Sunday’s Gospel readings other than Jesus is John the Baptist. We call John **THE** Baptist because he went around baptizing people with water and asking them to repent...and turn away from sinful behavior.

Repentance is something the secular world likes to ignore...as out of touch with modern thinking. Repentance means not just saying we’re sorry for our sins...it means showing we are sorry by changing the way we think and act. Repentance begins in the heart.

John the Baptist and Jesus were cousins. John was about six months older than Jesus. Although Scripture is silent on the subject...John and Jesus likely saw a lot of each other as they were growing up.

John’s mission was to be a messenger. His role was to come before Jesus to get people ready to meet him. He follows in a long line of prophets who had something to say to the people about turning away from destructive behavior and back toward God...so order could be restored in their lives.

Malachi was one such prophet who lived about 500 years before John. We don’t know anything for certain about Malachi...his name simply means...“My Messenger”.

The priests and people of Malachi’s time were cheating God...they were keeping the best and largest amounts of their offerings for themselves and giving God what was left over. Malachi’s message was also simple...stop trying to cheat God...life would only get messier.

Malachi told the people God was going to send another messenger to prepare his way, and the Lord they were looking for would come suddenly to his Temple. Malachi’s prophesy about another messenger who would himself deliver a message of hope for salvation was fulfilled in the life and work of John the Baptist.

Not everyone was happy to hear John the Baptist’s message about repentance and hope. His criticism of the puppet-king Herod got him arrested and thrown in jail...which is where today’s Gospel reading begins.

Even John had his doubts about Jesus. While he was sitting in jail thinking about his uncertain future, he heard about the things Jesus was doing. He sent some of his friends to Jesus to ask him, “Tell us, Jesus. Are you the one who was going to come, or should we expect someone else?” By “the ONE” they meant the Messiah.

Jesus sent John’s friends back to him and told them to tell John what they had seen for themselves: blind people had their sight restored, deaf people could hear again, people with skin diseases were healed, dead people were brought back to life. John then remembered Isaiah prophesied that all of these things would happen when the Messiah came.

There are still messengers in the Church today. Just before a man is ordained a priest, the bishop reads the Exhortation. The priest is told he is to be “*a Messenger, Watchman, and Steward of the Lord; to teach, and to premonish, to feed and to provide for the Lord’s family; to seek for Christ’s sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ forever.*”

On the Advent Ember days, which occur this week, please pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood. The Advent message is about hope and reconciliation to God through Jesus. That is Good News and a message we all need to hear. And please pray for the priests of Saint Joseph Parish who themselves are messengers of the hope we all have in Jesus.

“Tell us, Jesus. Are you the one who was going to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Listen to what John the Baptist says...wake up...Jesus is the ONE...and he is almost here.

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