

Daily Discipleship

Third Sunday of Advent (B) – John 1:6-8, 19-28

An Attitude of Discipleship: *Expectant*

Focus Question: *What are you expecting this Advent season?*

word of life

“He came to testify to the light.” John 1:28 (NRSV)

Read John 1:6-8, 19-28

Once again we meet John the Baptist, in this instance through the words of the Gospel writer of John. Like the writer of Mark, the writer of John emphasizes John the Baptist’s uniqueness.

Unlike Mark’s description of the Baptizer, the writer of John focuses not on John’s unique attire and diet, but rather on John the Baptist’s unique role in the Good News story of Jesus. John is to expectantly bear witness to Jesus, the light of the world.

Clearly, John had a strong following of disciples. Mark’s Gospel indicates that “people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him” (Mark 1:5 NRSV). He obviously stirred the expectations of the people, so much so that the Jewish leaders sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” (John 1:19 NRSV)

Even more clear is John the Baptist’s own understanding of his role. He is not the promised, expected Messiah. He is not Elijah, taken up to heaven in a chariot and expected to return to be the forerunner of the Messiah. Nor is he “the prophet” – one like Moses who was expected to fulfill the law, leading, and guiding the people. No, John’s singular role is to testify to the light – to prepare for One who is to come. His message of expectation and witness echoes the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Make straight the way of the Lord.” (John 1:23 NRSV; Isaiah 40: 3)

1. *What are some of the roles you have in your daily life?*
2. *What is your role as a disciple of Jesus?*
3. *What are some of the expectations associated with those roles? Are they clear to you?*

“The light” is rich with symbolism in John’s Gospel. It is God’s creative, life-giving Word, active and present in a dark world. (See John 1:1-5) John the Baptist’s role is to serve as a window to that light, pulling back the curtain so the light could be seen.

Through his call to “make straight the way of the Lord” (John 1:23 NRSV), John the Baptist paves the road for Jesus. He challenges people to clean the film and dust of sin away so the light can be brightly seen.

Note that the One John the Baptist anticipates (and about whom he testifies) is already present and “stands among you.” (John 1:26 NRSV) John’s role is secondary to the one who comes after him. John is not worthy to “untie the thong of his sandal” – a humble act of a servant or slave.

John the Baptist’s witness and expectation comes to fulfillment in Jesus. As the gospel story continues, the next day John sees Jesus coming toward him and he declares, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29 NRSV)

For John and for the disciples of every age, testimony bears fruit. Expectation finds fulfillment. All in the person of Jesus, the light of the world.

4. *How does Jesus fulfill your expectations?*

word among us

“Expectation.” It’s an interesting word. We speak of a young woman anticipating the birth of a child as “expecting.” We use it to articulate that which we anticipate. Expectations are not “pie-in-the-sky” hopes and dreams with no basis in reality; rather, there is a certain level of confidence that the anticipated hope will reach fulfillment.

1. *What do you expect might happen this week?*
2. *How confident are you that your expectations will become reality?*

There is a saying often heard from teachers and counselors: the measure of what people will achieve often reflects the expectations others have of them. Expect low results, and the person will live down to them. Expect great things, and the person is challenged to stretch and grow.

3. *What do you expect of a disciple of Christ?*
4. *What might God’s expectation be?*

John the Baptist had high expectations. He anticipated the coming of the Christ. His life’s mission – his life’s expectation – was that of pointing to the promised Messiah. Time and again, he directed attention away from himself and toward Jesus. Even though others didn’t readily recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of their expectations, he tirelessly said, “Look around. See the Christ who is present, in your midst!”

As disciples of Christ, our life’s expectation – like John the Baptist – is also to point to Jesus. We are called to look with confidence into the future and anticipate the fulfillment of God’s promises. We are called to look with confidence into the present and point out how God is here, active and moving. We are called to look with confidence into the past and bear witness to how God has been at work, even when we failed to see it at the time. Past, present, and future – all full of expectation!

5. *How is God here, active, and moving in your life?*
6. *How is God here, active, and moving in the life of the church?*

All this looking is directed not to ourselves but to the One who is the true light, Jesus Christ. The gospel writer of John offers a wonderful description of the attitude of a disciple: to be “a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.” (John 1:7-8 NRSV)

7. *How might you expect God to be present in your life this week?*
8. *How might you point to the true life, Jesus Christ, during the week? What might prevent you from doing so?*
9. *How can you support others as they strive to testify to the light of Christ?*

Prayer

Come, Lord Jesus and be our guest. Grant us expectant hearts, that we might bear witness to your coming in our midst. Amen

Dig Deeper

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

last word

This week, be aware of your expectations
of yourself and others.



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