

June 2021

Theme: John the Baptist

This is 30 minutes for prayer with periods of reflective silences. Yesterday was the Nativity of St John the Baptist, so today we will be considering what his life teaches us and how we can reflect that in our daily lives.

A reading from the Gospel of St Mark (Chapter 1, verses 2-8)

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

*'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"*

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with^[w] water; but he will baptize you with^[s] the Holy Spirit."

A reading from the Gospel of St John (Chapter 3, verses 25-30)

Now a discussion about purification arose between John's disciples and a Jew. They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing, and all are going to him." John answered, "No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Messiah,^[w] but I have been sent ahead of him.' He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."

John the Baptist's life is an example of humility, passion and sacrifice. It had a single purpose, to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. Central to his message were the themes of repentance, baptism and forgiveness. John himself was a prophet but he remained consistent in his calling, to prepare the way for someone greater still. His boldness in censuring the king ultimately cost him his life, but the living power of Christ's message and John's legacy as messenger could not be snuffed out.

Let us take some time this morning to celebrate John the Baptist and reflect on his relevance to our lives today.

So we pray:

Ever-living God, you sent John the Baptist to be a faithful envoy and to bear witness to the light. Help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn closer to you.

In a period of silence, let us give thanks for those messengers who have brought us closer to God and contemplate how we can better bear witness to the glorious light of Jesus Christ.

Compassionate God, John preached the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Forgive us for the times when we have sinned against You and against our

neighbour. Pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy and remind us that, despite our own flaws and failures, your love for us remains steadfast.

You so loved the world that you gave Your Son Jesus Christ to sacrifice himself for the sins of the whole world. In doing so you offered us the greatest example of forgiveness. Following your example, help us also to find forgiveness for others.

In a period of silence, we call to mind the times when we have broken our covenant with God and give thanks that we can be redeemed through Jesus Christ. We also remember those times when others have sinned against us or hurt us, and we take this time to search for forgiveness for them.

Ever-living God, You appointed John the Baptist to be the herald of the birth of Your Son Jesus Christ. Grant that as he died a martyr for truth and justice, so we may also live courageously in your name and bear witness to Your Word. Give us strength to challenge wrongdoing wherever we see it and commit ourselves to seek the truth.

In a period of silence, let us reflect on those times where we have been too timid to stand up for what we know is right or too afraid to speak the truth, and make a commitment to ourselves to be courageous.

Forgiving God, whilst in prison even John had doubts about whether Jesus was the true Messiah. We bring before you our own doubts and ask for your mercy. When we feel alone in this world, remind us of Your presence. Help us to see You in the world around us and ignite in us a passion to carry out your will.

In a period of silence, we remember those times when we have had doubts. We remind ourselves that it is in our nature to have doubts, and bring before God any uncertainty we may currently be feeling. We ask for God's forgiveness for the times where we have lost faith and pray for strength and confidence.

Loving God, your servant John proclaimed a new and radical message. Our world is barely recognisable from the one that John was born into, and yet the message remains the same.

Often we look around us and can see the wilderness that Isaiah referred to. We see a world that is broken, damaged by our own actions. We see and hear of great tragedies that seem too unbearable to contemplate. We pray that your light may seep into even the darkest corners of our world.

In a period of silence, we pray for our own broken world. We pray for the dispossessed, the powerless and the voiceless, for war torn countries and people, for victims of violence and abuse, both physical and emotional, for those persecuted for their faith or their beliefs, for those who struggle in either mind or body and for those who find themselves lost or afraid.

Almighty God, you sent John the Baptist as a prophet and yet he retained his humility. He was surrounded by followers and yet never lost sight of the bigger picture. Through the ministry of Your Son Jesus Christ, you have offered us the words of life. Enable us to be willing to hear and slow to speak. Give us humble hearts, prepared to allow space in our own minds for the opinions of others and for new ideas.

Keep us from a false humility that fails to recognise Your gracious gifts. Help us steward what you have given us and give us strength to follow in John's way of self-

sacrifice, thinking of others before ourselves and subduing our own interests in consideration of the needs of others.

In a period of silence, we consider the times where we have lost sight of God's message, wrapped up in our own successes and concerns. We remember the importance of humility, whilst also remembering that we have all been blessed with unique gifts. Let us also take a moment to contemplate how those gifts can be offered in pursuit of a wider effort.

And so, collecting our thoughts, we pray:

Almighty God,

by whose providence your servant John the Baptist was wonderfully born,
and sent to prepare the way of your Son our Saviour

by the preaching of repentance:

lead us to repent according to his preaching

and, after his example,

constantly to speak the truth, boldly to rebuke vice,

and patiently to suffer for the truth's sake;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

We close by joining together in the words of the grace:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,

Be with us all, evermore. Amen.