

SERMON FOR DECEMBER 13, 2020

TEXT: JOHN 1: 6-8

THEME: IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU

**6** There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. **8** He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

In the name of Jesus:

Everyone knows about how Issac Newton discovered gravity by having an appling fall on his head. He discovered and introduced the laws of gravity in the 1600s, which revolutionized science. But few don't know about the man behind the scenes.

Edmund Halley challenged Newton to think through his original notions. Halley corrected Newton's mathematical errors and prepared geometrical figures to support his discoveries. Halley coaxed the hesitant Newton to write his great work, Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy. Halley edited and supervised the publication, and actually financed its printing even though Newton was wealthier and easily could have afforded the printing costs.

Historians call it one of the most selfless examples in the annals of science as Newton began almost immediately to reap the rewards of

prominence; Halley received little credit. He did use the principles to predict the orbit and return of the comet that would later be called Halley's Comet, but Halley was a devoted scientist who didn't care who received the credit as long as the cause was being advanced. Halley understood that it wasn't about him.

There are really only two ways to read the Bible, and in turn, two ways to look at life. Either the Bible is basically about me, or is it basically about Jesus. What must I do, or what has Jesus done? When we look at John the Baptist, his life and ministry was never about him. He bore witness to the Light of Jesus Christ. John said: "He, Jesus, must increase, and I must decrease."

I read this week that we have an issue across our nation where our want ethic is stronger than our work ethic. For many, life is all about what I want, my needs, my desires. John, however, tells us otherwise. It is not about you. Life is about Jesus.

The Gospel writer John says that John the Baptist came "as a witness, to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him. **8** He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light." John came to bear

witness, to tell others about Jesus, for Jesus is the Light of the world, the Light of God shining brightly in the darkness.

As the winter solstice is about to be upon us, we notice that the days and the time of light we have during the day is growing significantly shorter. This time of year, it is as if we are living in perpetual darkness with little daylight during the day.

So too, we are indeed living in times of spiritual darkness.. Virginia Woolf seems to have had this in mind in her January 1915 diary entry: “The future is dark, which is on the whole, the best thing the future can be, I think.” We always live in this type of darkness. Just look at all of the unknowns that are in your life and mine. When will the vaccine be available? Will it be effective? Will it be safe? What about Christmas plans? Will it be wise to gather with family? Will it be socially acceptable? What about the economy? Will my business make it? Will I still have a job after the holidays? Will we ever go back to school full-time? How will we recover from the Pandemic and the shutdowns, personally and as a congregation? What will we as a congregation look like on the other side of this Pandemic? No one knows, it is like the blind leading the blind. The future is dark, indeed. No one knows what the future holds.

And yet, John comes into our lives today, not talking about himself, not pointing us to ourselves, our possibilities or potential. He comes bearing witness to the Light. He comes telling us about Jesus. Jesus is the Light of the world, and to hear John tell it, He is the only Light we need. For Jesus is the One through whom all things were made. Just as we confess in the Nicene Creed: “He is Light of Light, very God of very God, He is one substance with the Father by whom all things were made.

Jesus, the Light of the world, came into this world but the world, living in darkness, didn’t recognize Him. “**10** He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. **11** He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.” In fact, His own people rejected Him, leading Him to the cross to be crucified. But the darkness could not hold Him, for three days later Jesus rose from the grave, giving Light and salvation to all who believe in Him.

The greatness of John the Baptist was in the realization that he was not the Light of the world, Jesus is. John’s life, his duty, was to be a servant of Jesus and to tell others about Jesus. John’s life and ministry was never about him, it was all about Jesus.

The Bible says that if anyone has been baptized into Christ, he or she has put on Christ. You have been baptized into Christ. You are a new creation. Your life is hidden in Christ, so that the life that God now gives you, you are to live for Jesus. Your life is not about you, it is never about you, it is now about Jesus, and allowing His Light to shine in and through you for the eternal salvation of others. John serves as an example on how to live, that we live for Jesus, for it isn't about you. The message we have to share is that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. For if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and forgives our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. We walk in the Light as He is in the Light, living our lives in love for Him and showing our love for Him in living our lives for others. Just as He laid down His life for us, we now lay down our lives for others. For we are called to love others, not in words but in deeds and truth (1 John 1-3 selected passages). You are to love, just as Jesus loved.

Angus McGillivray was a Scottish prisoner in one of the camps filled with Americans, Australians, and Britons who had helped build the infamous Bridge over the River Kwai. The camp had become an ugly situation where it was a dog-eat-dog mentality. People would steal from and cheat one another. Men would sleep on their packs and yet have them stolen from under their

heads. It was the law of the jungle, until news came of Angus McGillivray's death. No one could believe the news of his death. He was one of the strong ones, who was expected to survive. Soon after they pieced together the details and learned the true story.

The Scottish soldiers took their buddy system very seriously. Their buddy was called their "mucker," and these soldiers believed that it was literally up to each of them to make sure their "mucker" survived. Angus's mucker, though, was dying, and everyone had given up on him, everyone, of course, but Angus. He had made up his mind that his friend would not die. Someone had stolen his mucker's blanket. So Angus gave him his own, telling his mucker that he had "just come across an extra one." Likewise, every mealtime, Angus would get his rations and take them to his friend, stand over him and force him to eat them, again stating that he was able to get "extra food." Angus was going to do anything and everything to see that his buddy got what he needed to recover.

But as Angus's mucker began to recover, Angus collapsed, slumped over, and died. The doctors discovered that he had died of starvation complicated by exhaustion. He had been giving of his own food and shelter. He had given

everything he had -- even his very life. The ramifications of his acts of love and unselfishness had a startling impact on the compound.

As news spread about the reason for Angus McGillivray's death, the feel of the camp began to change. Suddenly, men began to focus on their mates, their friends, and humanity of living beyond survival, of giving oneself away. They began to pool their talents -- one was a violin maker, another an orchestra leader, another a cabinet maker, another a professor. Soon the camp had an orchestra full of homemade instruments and a church called the "Church Without Walls" that was so powerful, so compelling, that even the Japanese guards attended. The men began a university, a hospital, and a library system. The place was transformed; an all but smothered love revived, all because one man named Angus gave all he had for his friend. They learned that life was not about them, it was about their neighbor.

We are called to live, not for ourselves, but for Christ, living for our neighbor. Jesus says: ""Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12)" John the Baptist lived his life, giving witness to Christ. May each of us do the same, for life isn't about you, it's about Jesus. Amen