



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 1:19-28

“The Witness of John the Baptist”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well we're turning for our Scripture reading to the Gospel of John chapter 1 verse 19 through verse 28, and we're going to read about the witness of John the Baptist. John chapter 1 verse 19 through verse 28, and the apostle writes, “And this is the witness of John.” That's a wonderful introduction to the testimony of John the Baptist and that of course is the title of the message today, “The Witness of John.” It's almost as if John the Apostle were saying if we were having a meeting in which John were to give his testimony, this is what he would have said,

This is the witness of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Messiah. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah. And they who were sent were of the Pharisees.

That verse may be rendered in other ways and the meaning would be somewhat different. I'm inclined to think that it should be rendered something like this. “And they who were of the Pharisees had been sent.” In other words, the company sent by the Sanhedrin composed

people from the Sadducees or from the Pharisees and from others as well. But those who were of the Pharisees ask him and said unto him,

Why baptizes then, if thou be not that Messiah, nor Elijah, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you whom ye know not, He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to loose. These things were done in Βηθαβαρᾶ [*Bēthabara*] beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Most of your texts probably have instead of Βηθαβαρᾶ [*Bēthabara*], Bethany, and probably that is the reading to be preferred at this place. One of the reasons for the rise of the reading in some of the manuscripts Βηθαβαρᾶ [*Bēthabara*] is because Bethany, the well-known Bethany was not beyond the Jordan, but very close to Jerusalem. And so as a result there arose a reading by some scribe who thought that perhaps the other was intended. But as often is the case it is likely that there were two Bethanys, one near Jerusalem and one beyond the Jordan. You may remember that in this land of Palestine there were two Bethlehems. One was Bethlehem Ephrathah, and there was another Bethlehem in one of the other tribes to the north. And so when Micah the prophet gives his prophesy about the birth of our Lord in Bethlehem he says, “And Thou Bethlehem Ephrathah.” He’s not like the Delphic oracle which uses Bethlehem and at least give him two chances. But very specifically Bethlehem Ephrathah, and so just as there were two Bethlehems there were probably two Bethanys and therefore Bethany was beyond the Jordan. Not the Bethany near Jerusalem. May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

[prayer removed from audio]

[Message] This morning our subject as I mentioned in the reading of the Scripture is “The Witness of John.” Israel was a decadent nation in John’s day and in Jesus’ day. It was a

nation stricken with spiritual blindness, with moral degeneracy and political corruption.

There was a great deal of lack of courage on the part of the leaders of the nation as well. The Apostle John when he gives his evaluation of the nation in this gospel traces their failure largely to their spiritual inadequacy. He said,

Though the Lord Jesus Christ had done so many signs before them, yet they did not believe on him, That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

And so John traces the failure of the day to the fact that they did not respond to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then of course reveals the spiritual inadequacy of the nation. It was a nation that was spiritually decadent. John the Baptist had the same evaluation when the tax collectors come to him to be baptized and said to him,

Teacher what should we do? He said unto them, ‘Exact no more than that which is appointed you.’ When the soldiers came and ask of him, saying, ‘What should we do?’ He said unto them, ‘Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages’.

So it is evident from the things that the apostle said and the things that the Baptist said in his preaching that Israel was a decadent nation in their day. It was not a nation troubled by drugs so far as we know like ours, or by sexual titillation, or parental delinquency and drink, but nevertheless it was a decadent nation with its own particular outcroppings of the natural man.

There is a very famous statement that Wordsworth made with reference to conditions in England in his day. He writes in a plaintive cry to Milton and Milton’s ghost and says, “Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour: England hath need of thee: she is a fen of stagnant waters.” Well, that could be said of our day, and it could also be said of the day of John the Apostle and John the Baptist. In a day like that when the nation was in a condition

like that, John the Baptist, John says, was sent from God for testimony to just such a age. We read in the sixth verse, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.” Perhaps we overlooked the fact that John the Baptist was really one of the important men of his day. Out of the one hundred and fifty sections of the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, in twenty-three of them, John the Baptist is found in one way or another.

What was the testimony of John the Baptist? Did he come and give messages on love, sex, and marriage? Did he come and give messages on family planning? Did he come and give messages on individual psychotherapy? Did he come to conduct clinics in which marital and family therapy was dispensed? There may be a place for these things. I do not deny that, but John saw that the need of his people was much more radical than that. Israel had left her first love. Israel was a nation without God. Israel was a nation that had turned away from Yahweh. He didn't think that theology was impractical, stodgy, useless. What did he give them? Well John the Baptist gave the people of his day, perish the thought, theology.

Did you notice today when you were singing your Christmas hymns, did you notice how theological those hymns are? “Hark the Herald Angels Sing,” why, there we have texts that have to do with the doctrine of reconciliation, “God and sinners reconciled.” We have the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, “Hail the incarnate deity.” We even have a text which explains in a very beautiful way the kind of union that existed between the divine nature and the human nature, “Mild he lays his glory by.” Those hymns are great because they are filled with theology. They aren't filled with shallow thinking. They're filled with theology, and John was successful because he gave them doctrine about man. He gave them doctrine about Jesus Christ, and he preached in the power of the Holy Spirit because he knew that it was

doctrine that the people of his day needed. Doctrine is the only thing that will lead to stability, to grace, and to joy. The Apostle Paul says that doctrine molds character. He talks about that form, that mold of teaching to which you were delivered in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

Last night I read a very interesting section in an article that Benjamin Warfield wrote on “Is the Shorter Catechism Worthwhile?” Now if you didn't grow up as a Presbyterian you might not know what the Shorter Catechism is, but the Westminster Confession of Faith is the doctrinal standard of the reformed churches, and in order to communicate the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith to the new comers to the faith and also to the young people a Shorter Catechism was written. Now the Shorter Catechism was designed to put in shorter, briefer, a little bit more simpler form the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith. And when you grow up in the Presbyterian church a couple of generations ago you were taught that in the Sunday school. You read the Bible stories. You were taught the Scriptures, but you were also expected to learn the Shorter Catechism. It was one of the reasons for the doctrinal stability of those who grew up in the Presbyterian church in those days.

Thomas Carlyle wrote, “The older I grow, and now I stand on the brink of eternity, the more comes back to me the first sentence of the catechism which I learned when a child, and the fuller and deeper it's meaning becomes. What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Robert Louis Stevenson as you know was a Scott. He learned the catechism when he was a child and though he wandered a good bit from it, he never really lost its influence. It was always upon him, and Mrs. Sellars, who was a shrewd, but kindly, observer, tells of him in her delightful recollections that Stevenson bore with him to his dying day what she calls “The indelible mark of the Shorter Catechism.” The English Catechism

began, Mr. Stevenson pointed out with, “What is your name?” The Scottish Catechism began with, “What is the chief end of man?” And then the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. It’s no wonder that the Scotts were known for their biblical doctrine and for their theology, and we are their debtors today in the Christian church.

But Mr. Warfield tells a most interesting story and that’s why I gave you that little introduction to it. There was an officer in the United States army some time ago who was serving in the western states, and at the time in one of the great western cities there was a great deal of excitement and a great deal of rioting, and so he was there in order to keep the peace. He said that he was walking along the street one day and he saw a man approaching him, and he said this man was of singularly combined calmness and firmness of mien, whose very demeanor inspired confidence. So impressed was he, this soldier with his bearing of the man that was coming to him amidst all of the surrounding uproar that when he passed by the officer, the officer turned around to take a look at him. And just as he turned around to look at the man who passed by, the man turned around and took a look at him. And when he saw the officer looking at him, he turned, stopped, came back to the officer and he said, “He put his finger on his chest and he said, ‘What is the chief end of man?’” And he said, “I said, ‘The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.’” And he said, “The man said to me, I knew you were a Shorter Catechism boy by your looks.” And the officer said, “Well you know that’s exactly what I was thinking when you passed by. I just knew you were a Shorter Catechism boy by the look on your face.” And then, Mr. Warfield goes on to say, “It is worthwhile to be a Shorter Catechism boy because they grow to be men. And better than that, they are exceedingly apt to grow to be men of God.” “Train up a child in the way in which he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it,” the Scriptures say.

What the world needs is biblical doctrine, and in John’s day the generation to which the Baptist was sent needed biblical doctrine. And that’s what they were getting. They were told that in order for them to be prepared for the coming of the King, there must be repentance and there must be baptism in the light of their repentance and forgiveness of their sins. And so, John went out over the land of Judea and Israel baptizing with the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and people were pouring out from Judea and Jerusalem in order to hear this great preacher and then to be baptized by him. Well as is so often the case the religious leaders in the city of Jerusalem became disturbed over the fact that here was a preacher who did not have their imprimatur who seemed to be very successful and furthermore was calling people back to the things of the word of God and they probably were asking very embarrassing questions that revealed the departure from the faith on the part of the leaders in Jerusalem. And so they thought well it’s probably time for us to send out an embassy to find out what in the world is happening because everybody was excited, expectant and they were even debating, Luke tells us, whether John the Baptist might not be the Messiah himself. So in the midst of the expectancy, in the midst of the excitement, a group of men from the city of Jerusalem, from the Sanhedrin it seems went out in order to ask John the Baptist the question, “Who are you?” It’s like the committee on the minister and his work who leave in order to find out what’s happening in a church where the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is being preached and people are getting saved.

Well they come the John the Baptist and we read in the 20th verse that he confesses and he confesses very directly exactly what he was preaching and believing. Now the interrogation is described in verse 20 through 27 and it begins with a double use of the term confess. It almost seems as if this is unnecessary. “And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Messiah.” What I would gather that what this means is that when he

says he confesses, he simply stated the facts as they really were, and then more specifically the second confess indicates he confessed that he was not the Messiah. In other words, he told the facts exactly as they were and then he said specifically, “I am not the Messiah.”

Now the questions that were asked were, “Are you the Messiah?” and then in a moment, “Why are you baptizing then?” But to the first question which has to do with his identity, “Who are you?” well John gives us both a negative and a positive reply. One thing you can say about John the Baptist, he was a bold man. He was not a conformer. He was a stern Elijah kind of man, and he spoke exactly what God gave him to speak. In fact the providence of God so arranged it that John’s message was illustrated by the background out of which he came and the place where he preached. He came from the desert. He didn't eat any complicated foods. He didn't go out to the restaurants and have filet mignon and all of the other things that go with a lovely expensive meal. But John ate locusts and wild honey. Furthermore his clothes were not Hart, Schaffner & Marx. They were simply skins; that’s all. In addition he came from the desert, that part of the land which was very dry and arid. All of this designed to give a visual picture of a man of God in the midst of a people who are just as dry and bereft of the teaching of the word of God as the desert is of water and fruitfulness. So his very life and ministry, his demeanor, everything about him was designed to teach that it is God speaking in the midst of a people who need the word of God but who do not have it.

Now what I like about John is his directness. In fact he is so direct that it’s almost as if he is abrupt and curt. And I think probably because it really got just a little bit on his nerves that they were interested in who he was and not in who it was that he was preaching in his messages. Notice, they come to him and in the twentieth verse, in answer to the question, “Who art thou?” He says, “I am not the Christ,” five letters [words], then they say to him, “Art thou Elijah?” and he said, “I am not,” three words, and then they say, “Art thou that

prophet?” and he said, “No,” one word. Five words, three words, one word, you can just tell he’s not excited over these questions at all. Who are you? Are you the Messiah? I am not the Messiah. Are you Elijah? I am not. Are you the prophet? No. You really get what he intends for you to get don't you?

Now John is a witness and because he’s a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ he’s impatient with all of these other things. Contrast the Lord Jesus Christ’s testimony. John seeks to turn men’s attention away from himself to the one he preaches. The Lord Jesus Christ seeks to turn attention to himself. We might say, “That’s a failure.” After all isn't it nicer to turn attention away from yourself to someone else. Isn't that the nice thing to do? Don't be such an ego maniac as to turn things to yourself. But when they asked the Lord questions like that, he made strange statements. Show us the Father. Why “Philip have I been so long time with you and yet hast Thou not known me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. How sayest Thou then show us the Father.” Show us the Father, the Jews said. Why listen if you’ve seen me you’ve seen the Father, he said to the Jews. He said, “I’m the way. I’m the truth. I’m the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” The Lord Jesus draws attention to himself. John turns attention away from himself. But John is a great testifier to a great Lord and our Lord is the greatest of all testifies to his own divine glory, for he is that and if he does not do that he is untruthful. And in fact even the world hearing the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in spite of themselves deep down within has to confess he is saying the truth. We may not respond to him. We may not like him. We may not yield to him. We may not extend our trust to him, but deep down within there is the conviction in the heart of every man he speaks the truth when he says, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

Now positively they keep after John, “Well John what sayest Thou of thyself? They want some word out of the Baptist. And so John says well let me give you the facts of my resume. I was born in such and such, from such and such a family. I’ve had these positions and I’ve had this success in my ministry. I preached over there near Bethany, and I baptized two hundred people there. I preached over at such and such, and I baptized there. In fact I’ve conducted meetings all over this part of the country. And some of the great men of this area have come to trust in the Messiah through my preaching. I conduct seminars every weekend on love, sex, and marriage, and also on prophesy. I do that as well, and I’ve had these meetings around and furthermore you have to pay \$40 or \$50 dollars a weekend in order to hear my preaching. I’m going up on my rates too because we’ve had so many who have been responding to them. You can just see all of the things that our modern day preachers might say when they are asked the question, “What sayest Thou of thyself?” so his biographical data.

Now what do you think this man is going to say? One of the reasons we know about John the Baptist and we don't know about all of those other preachers down through the years who have faded off into the insignificance of anonymity is the fact that he replied like this. He said, “I’m the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” “What sayest Thou of thyself, John?” “I’m the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord as said the prophet Isaiah.” He’s the voice. All four of the gospels, he identifies himself as the voice that Isaiah spoke about in the fortieth chapter of his book. He is not the prophet. He’s not the Messiah. He’s not Elijah. He’s just a voice. His real function is not to teach ethics, not to instruct Israel in how to live, but his real ministry is to clear the way for the King. I’m the one who goes out and says the King is coming. Believe in him. Trust in him.

Now Paul tells us later on in the Book of Acts when he met John’s disciples later on, some who evidently had not heard that the Lord Jesus had died and been resurrected. He met

these disciples of John over near Ephesus on one of his journeys, and he recognized that there was something strange about them. They did not evidently know that the Spirit was present. So he said, “Did you receive the Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “We haven't even heard of that the Spirit has come.” That's the meaning of the expression there. And then Paul says, “Now John preached his baptism in testimony to the fact that the people of his day should believe on him who was to come after him. So Paul says that John preached a coming Savior, and he baptized for the remission of sins in the light of that. So he's just a voice. He's the herald of the King who is to come.

Now he alludes to a custom in ancient times which was very common when a King or some important personage would come to a city or a little village. Everybody would go out and if the roads were bumpy, if they had potholes in them—pot holes makes me think of the street on which I live. Did you read that foolish thing in *Time* magazine about a year ago about Dallas, what a great city we have? You know one of the great things about Dallas? It is a great city. I love Dallas by the way, but *Time* magazine doesn't know what's going on in Dallas. They said, do you know they really said this in *Time* magazine, that if you have a pothole in front of your street it won't be there but for just about a day or so because they'll rush out from City Hall and they'll fill that pothole. That's what *Time* magazine said. Why we've got potholes on our street that Noah knew about. [Laughter] In fact if you turn one of my corners you're liable to disappear from humanity. [Laughter] And I do believe that the energy crisis would be much alleviated if I didn't have to go down my street just like this dodging potholes. Well at any rate they had potholes in those days too, and if they did and if an important person was coming they would rush out and either build a new road into the city or else they would fill the potholes. They would make smooth the way. That's what Isaiah is talking about. He said before the King comes there will come an ambassador and he will

announce the coming of the King. He will say make smooth the way, the King is coming. That was John’s ministry. He was the ambassador of the King. So he said I’m just a voice. I don’t have any resumes. I don’t have any biographical summary of what I have done. I’m a voice of one crying in the wilderness.

“Well but what about this baptism you’ve been doing?” they said. Why are you baptizing if you’re just a voice? “Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Messiah, nor Elijah, neither that prophet?” Now, John’s baptism was different from proselyte baptism. Proselyte baptism was a practice that grew up during the intertestamental period evidently. So, when a Gentile became convinced that Judaism was the religion of the true God and wanted to become a Jew, like Lydia for example, or some of the others in the Book of Acts who were proselytes to the faith from the nations. The Gentile would come and say I’m convinced that Yahweh is the true God. I want to become part of you. Well the way to become a Jew was to be baptized, first of all. Secondly, to offer a sacrifice for the Levitical law was of course still valid, and then a gift would be offered, those three things. But in the baptizing of the proselyte, he would baptize himself. He would immerse himself. He would go to a pool of water and the people would be about, the officials. He would baptize himself. He would go and offer a sacrifice and then he would give a gift and then he would be a member of the Jewish faith. He would be a Jew.

Now John the Baptist comes along and he preaches faith in the King who is soon to come. In fact he says he’s standing in your midst now. Be ready for him, and they confess their sins. They were baptized by John in token of their faith and they received the forgiveness of sins. Now the difference between John’s baptism however from proselyte baptism was in the first place, he baptized them. They didn’t baptize themselves. He evidently felt some sense of authority in doing it, and he baptized them. But most of all the

thing that marked out John’s baptism as different was the fact that he baptized Jews. In other words, he gave testimony by his baptism that they needed conversion too and that it wasn't enough to be born in Israel in order to be saved. One must have faith, personal faith, in the Messiah who was to come. So, “Why are you baptizing,” John?

Now his answer is very plain and clear again. He knows that it’s not for everyone to institute a new ritual. He knows that he cannot institute something that has absolute authority. Only the Messiah can do that and if he does something that’s different it must be because of the Messiah. It must not have validity of itself. And so he replies, “I baptize with water.” My baptism is only a water baptism. The other gospels fill in the other things that John said. “There comes one after me. He will baptize with the Holy Spirit.” To be baptized by the Holy Spirit is entirely different from being baptized in water. “I baptize in water.” Furthermore, “There is one who stands in the midst of us whom you know not. He is really the one who is the Messiah.” Now John’s answer is an answer that first of all speaks of the lowliness of his own work. My baptism is not saving. It’s not self authenticating. It’s because of the one who stands in the midst, but central to it is the excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to notice this statement that John makes here when he says in the twenty-seventh verse, “He it is who coming after me is preferred before me who shoes latchet I am not worthy to loose.” In other words, John abases himself in order that he, the Lord Jesus Christ, may be seen. Sometimes we miss the point of that. Let me explain what was really underlined by John’s words. He said, “I’m not worthy to loose his sandals.”

Now teachers in those days were not paid. Teachers in ancient Palestine were not paid. It would be a terrible thing to ask for money for the divine teaching. Why that’s an obvious conflict of interest. And so consequently teachers were not paid anything. They looked to the Lord for the supply of their funds. They were not paid. They were given gifts.

They had to be given gifts to live of course. But they were supported by the individuals who were blessed by their teaching.

Now disciples of teachers therefore could help the teachers. They could do things for their teachers, but the teachers were not paid. Now they could do all kinds of things for them, but there was one thing that a disciple would not do for a teacher. You know what that was? Loose his sandal, take his shoes off. That was so low a task, so menial a task that only a servant could do that. A disciple could do every other thing that a servant could do for a teacher, but he could not loose his sandals. He could not unloose the latchet. John says with reference to the Lord Jesus, “I am not even worthy to loose the latchet of this one who is to come.” “I’m not even worthy to be a servant.” Disciple? Not even worthy to be a servant of him. He is so excellent in his person. What a magnificent testimony John the Baptist gives to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There’s an old story I like about a black man who worked on a river boat on the Mississippi River, and one day he was on the deck of the boat and one of the passengers was standing by and as another river boat passed by he said, “There goes the captain.” And the man looked a little surprised and he said, “Years ago when I was going up and down the Mississippi I fell over board and I could not swim.” And he said, “The captain dove off and rescued me, and every time we ever pass the captain since then I just love to point him out. There’s the captain.” That was John’s attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

I love that story and I think I’ve told it to you not too long ago of the man who went to Scotland to hear the preachers. He had heard that Scotland had some great preachers and in his day, three hundred and so years ago, Scotland did have some great preachers. He went up to Scotland and he made it his job to hear a number of them. He went first of all to Saint Andrews to listen to Robert Blair. He came back and he said, “That man showed me the

majesty of God.” And then he heard Samuel Rutherford who’s buried in Saint Andrews. When you got to Saint Andrews Scotland you can go and see the tomb of Samuel Rutherford, magnificent Christian man, one of the ones most responsible for the Westminster Confession of Faith. I’ve stood a half a dozen or a dozen times in front of Samuel Rutherford’s grave in Saint Andrews Scotland. He heard Samuel Rutherford, and he said, “That man showed me the loveliness of Jesus Christ.” And then he went over to Ervine in Scotland to hear a discourse by David Dixon, one of the more elderly but well favored preachers of Scotland, and he said, “He showed me all my heart.” That’s what preachers do. They show us the majesty of God. They show us the loveliness of Jesus Christ, and then they try to show us all our heart, what we really are, why we need the loveliness of Jesus Christ and why the majesty of God stirs us to worship and praise.

John also reveals that man here is blind. He says, “There stands one in your midst whom ye know not.” He confesses that he did not know him either. It’s an indirect censure of the stupidity and blindness of man. And one can never understand the ministry of John the Baptist, he seems to say, until you understand him. And you cannot understand the ministry that I give you until you come to understand him. For the understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit is the secret to the understanding of Holy Scripture.

Did you notice that John’s testimony is almost entirely in negatives? I’m not the Messiah. I am not. No. I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, denying any definite position from himself. His theme is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, the centrality and the excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ. He’s only a voice. His baptism is only in water. The two things for which he might have been known, his name and his work, why, he dispenses with them. He doesn't even want a name. He’s a voice, and his most characteristic endeavor, the work of baptism, he said, “There is no sufficiency in it whatsoever. It’s merely a baptism in

water. All sufficiency exists in the King, the ambassador insists. And so for a decadent and corrupt day only the Lord Jesus Christ can deliver. John pointed to him, and he pointed away from the Law of Moses. He pointed away for [from] all self trust to faith in him who should come after him that is on Christ Jesus as Paul said.

Wesley was right in doing what he did. He said, “When he came to a village he simply came to town and offered them Jesus Christ.” That was the witness of John. That’s the witness of preaching, the offering of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures, Jesus Christ according to the doctrine contained in the Scriptures, Jesus Christ according to the theology that we sing in our Christmas hymns.

If you’re here this morning and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ hear the testimony of John the Baptist. “I’m the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” He’s the King. He stands in our midst, and he is of such an exalted character I do not even have the position of a slave. I cannot not even loose the latchet on his sandals. He’s the one who came after me, but he’s really preferred before me because he was before me. He’s the word who was God, who became flesh, who dwelt among us, whose glory we have beheld, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth, the grace of redemption the truth of divine revelation. May God minister to your needs through the testimony of John the Baptist. We haven’t heard the end of it for he’ll go on to talk about the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, but that’s for next week.

If you’re here and you’ve never believed in Christ, come to him. Rest in him like John, like the Apostle John, like the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, like the saints down through the centuries have rested themselves upon his breast and found him sufficient for all of their needs. He is sufficient for yours. Come to him. Receive as a free gift everlasting life, not through the sacraments of the church, not through good works, not through education,

not through culture, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has accomplished the saving work. Trust him.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the boldness, the frankness, the directness, even the abruptness of the great ambassador of the King, the King who was even greater. We praise Thee for this sterling, stern, yet lovable in so many ways, man of God. Of whom the Lord Jesus said, “There has not risen among them born of women one greater than John the Baptist.” We thank Thee for his testimony. We pray O God, that it may be fruitful even in our day to point men to the King. And Father if there are some in this audience who do not know what it is to trust the King, who do not yet know what John knew, the excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, that through that Holy Spirit Thou wilt pierce their hearts with conviction for their sin, conviction concerning their eminent peril of eternal judgment, and by wonderful grace, stir them to turn to him who can save to the uttermost the Lord Jesus Christ. O God save souls in this audience, we do pray. And now go with us for the glory of Jesus Christ. Enable us to give true testimony to him. For his name’s sake, amen.