**Called By God to Point to Christ**

Based on [John 1:19-28](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn1.19-28)

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Fourth Sunday of Advent – *Rorate Coeli*

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This gospel for the fourth and last Sunday in Advent is called “the testimony of John.” And in summary, he testifies that he is not the Christ, but he is the one called by God to prepare for and point to the Christ.

John the Baptist gave this testimony to certain priests and Levites who were sent by the Pharisees to question him. At this time John was drawing a lot of attention—baptizing and preaching repentance. He was drawing crowds and had a following. And the priests and Levites they had the right and responsibility to stand sentinel over the religious affairs of Jerusalem. They were the Ecclesiastical Supervisors, the District Presidents, the Synodical Overseers of Jerusalem. Without their authorization, without seeking their support or checking it with them, John began to preach and baptize in their jurisdiction. So they come to ask John, who are you and where do you come from?

False preachers, are and always have been a problem among God’s people. And God has always equipped his people to discern who is a true preacher, by recognizing whether or not that person has been called by God and are speaking His Word with His authority.

If John were baptizing and preaching without their approval and without God’s authority from scripture, he would be easily and immediately proven a fraud. If a man says he’s from the police, you ask him to show you his badge, if he doesn’t he proves himself a fraud. So they are saying to John “Show us your preaching badge. We didn’t give you one. Are you claiming authority from the Scriptures. Then who are you? We need to report back to those who sent us.”

They suppose there are three possibilities for John, that would give him a preaching license. If he were the Christ, Elijah, or “the prophet”, he would not need their approval. John admits he is none of these.

Instead John explains a fourth category. He says, “**I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said**.” John says, “The voice in the wilderness that Isaiah talks about in his scripture, that’s me. That’s where you can look me up and see what I’m about, what I’ve come to do. That’s why I am preaching and baptizing and do not bother to get your approval. I am not the Christ, but God has sent me to prepare the way for the Christ.”

These priests and Levites were spies for the Pharisees. This communicates to us that these men were not John’s friends, nor did they come in genuineness to seek understanding. Elsewhere in Scripture we are made aware of the animosity between John and the Pharisees. When they had come to John’s baptism he said to them, “**You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance…**” John presumed to call the religious leaders to repentance. John was a “voice crying in the wilderness”, which means that Jerusalem, God’s Holy city had become a spiritual wilderness—because the religious leaders had led the people away from God. It was out of this situation of religious decadence that John came and preached, and the Pharisees, hypocrites, did not like it.

John admits he is not the Christ, Elijah, or the Prophet, and they ask him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” This is a rhetorical question. What they are saying is, “Since you admit you are not Christ, Elijah, or the Prophet; you should not be baptizing.”

Like so many self-righteous hypocrites, they can’t think beyond their own conclusions. John shows from Scripture, from Isaiah, that he has a legitimate calling from God. These men don’t pay attention to it or engage what he’s saying. **And that we, the hearers are reminded at this point that they were sent by the Pharisees, we know that they were on a witch hunt from the start.** They knew if he said he was the Christ, Elijah, or the Prophet they’d have him for blasphemy; if he said anything else, they’d have him for illegitimacy. It the same politician’s bag of tricks that is a mark of the world and its works and ways, and they tried to do it with Jesus too.

**Matthew 21:23-27 says,** [**23**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/21-23.htm)And when [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” [**24**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/21-24.htm)Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. [**25**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/21-25.htm)The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ [**26**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/21-26.htm)But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” [**27**](http://biblehub.com/matthew/21-27.htm)So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

The religious authorities were never really interested in where John’s authority came from. **There is a theme throughout the Gospels showing that the Jewish Leaders were not willing to accept any authority that did not come from them—even if that authority was from heaven.** Blind guides.

This Gospel is called “the testimony of John”. It is not just about John, but John’s testimony. John’s purpose is to witness to the Christ who is to come, who is greater than he, whose sandals he is not worthy to untie. And when Jesus does arrive John makes clear that he understands his calling, he is not the christ, only the one who points to Jesus. John says, “He must increase; I must decrease.”

Jesus is God veiled in Human flesh; God in the form of a servant. It would be sneaky if God sent his Son into the world in that way and that was it.

The true mark of any true prophet or preacher is what does he point you to. Does he point you back to yourself? Does he point you to the world for help. Does he point to himself? A true preacher points you to Christ. God sent John, to speak plainly and earnestly as to who this unlikely savior is. John was the lamp shining light on the saviour. He was the herald, telling people who Jesus was.

John does not point to himself, he points to the Christ. And it is for the sake of the coming messiah that John presumes to preach repentance and baptize for the forgiveness of sins. He is not Elijah, but if you will accept it, he comes in the spirit of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. The bridegroom is coming and the wise virgins must be ready to meet him. Only he comes, not according to the ways of the world, but the way of the Word of God, who became flesh and came into our world to live among us the first Christmas.