

Rorate coeli
St. John 1:19-28
December 21st, 2025
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald P. Dulas

He That Cometh After Me

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Sermon Text:

“John answered them, saying, ‘I baptize in water: in the midst of you standeth One Whom ye know not, even He that cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose.’”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, we give Thee hearty thanks that for a comfort to us poor sinners Thou hast ordained and sent Thy Son as a righteous King and Savior to redeem His people from sins, from the power of the devil, and from eternal death; and we most heartily beseech Thee, so enlighten and govern us by Thy Holy Spirit that we may ever know and confess Christ to be our King and Savior, and, firmly trusting in Him alone, obtain eternal life; through the same Thy dear Son, our Lord + Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today, my dear friends, we hear a voice in the wilderness crying to us to “make straight the way of the Lord.” We hear the voice of the forerunner of the Christ. In the sermon from this past Wednesday, we heard about the baby St. John the Baptist leaping in the womb of his mother Elisabeth. He leaped because in her womb he had no voice to give to proclaim the Lord’s coming. Today, however, the forerunner of the Christ has found his voice. He is silent no longer. He does not have to resort to leaping only to cry out to all who would hear to “make straight the way of the Lord.”

He is not a bruised reed that shakes to and fro in the wind. Tossed to and fro by every false doctrine that blows his way. He is not one dressed in soft raiment, like kings in kings’ palaces. Those who come all slick and polished; who are so impressive that they get their own TV shows and are followed by thousands of people led away by their gloss and glow. He is a prophet, yea, he is more than a prophet, for he prepares the way of the Lord. He makes straight the way of the Lord. He prepares for the One Who cometh after him. He is the forerunner of the Christ. He is not the Christ. He is not Elijah. He is not the Prophet promised by Moses. He is the one who points to the Christ. He is the one who points to the Prophet long foretold by Moses.

St. John the Baptist tells the crowds, and the priests and Levites from Jerusalem, that he is not the Christ. The Israelites had been so long without a prophet, that when a prophet comes, they immediately believed him to be the Messiah. They were without a prophet, mind you, because they had persecuted and killed all the prophets that the Lord God sent to them. But they, especially those sent by the Pharisees in Jerusalem, believed him to be the prophet, the Christ, the One Who was to be coming from the Lord. He boldly confesses that he is not the Christ, but he is the one who comes before the Christ.

The Christ, St. John tells us, is One standing among them. That is how close He is. That is how close the time for the coming of the Son of Man is. He is standing in their midst. As you have heard me say before, the season of Advent is sometimes referred to as the season of St. John the Baptist. For the season of Advent, which we are in, is to prepare the way for the Church to receive the coming of the Lord + Jesus as a Baby Boy born in Bethlehem of Judea. The season of Advent prepares the way of the Lord for all of the ways that our Lord + Jesus comes to us. He came to us as a Baby Boy, as the Son of God wrapped up in linen cloths and lying in a manger. But, He also comes to us now, this very day, in His Word and Sacraments. Wherever two or three are gathered together in His Name, as we are this day, He promises that He will be with us. Our Lord + Jesus will also come again on the Last Day to take us to our eternal home in heaven.

This is what the forerunner, St. John the Baptist, proclaims to prepare the way of the Lord. This is how all preachers are to prepare the way of the Lord. This is how the way of the Lord is made straight, but pointing to the Christ. The way of the Lord is made straight by preaching that the One standing in our midst is soon coming. His time is soon nigh. The day of His appearing is approaching. St. John the Baptist did this for the Jews who came to hear him preach in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where he was baptizing. But, forerunners of the Christ still preach His coming today. We preach that He is coming soon to take us from this vale of tears to our eternal home in heaven. Today, preachers are to preach about the Christ, Who came to redeem His people from sin and death, so that all those who hear, and believe, might have eternal life with Him. They preach into our ears that the Lord + Jesus is coming again on the Last Day, and that His time is fast approaching.

Therefore, those who hear are to prepare themselves for the One Who comes after the forerunner. How do they prepare? How do we prepare? By hearing and receiving the Word of the Lord God which points to the Christ. And that is what St. John the Baptist, and all true forerunners of the Christ, does. It would have been very easy for St. John to take the praise of men for himself. They already viewed him as the Messiah. He could have easily taken up that mantle for himself. The temptation exists for preachers today, too. There are many who would give their hearers exactly what they expect the preacher to give them. Many false preachers scratch the itchy ears of their hearers telling them what they want to hear, and not what they need to hear.

St. John the Baptist could have easily claimed the mantle of Messiah when priests and Levites come to him. He was after all their kinsman, for Zacharias, his father, was a priest of the order of Abijah. The ones sent to him, probably grew up with him. Therefore, when they begin to see him baptize, that is, when they begin to see someone they know, performing a new sign that offers forgiveness of sins, they begin to think he is the Christ. He could have easily forsaken his sacred duty and told them what they wanted to hear. And he would have been praised of men. But, he would not have the praise of the Lord God. Faithful preachers, like St. John the Baptist, do not give glory to themselves, or to mankind, or even to the things of this earth. Faithful preachers, like St. John the Baptist, point to the Christ. They point to the true Messiah.

This is why our ears should always be attentive to the preaching that we are hearing. If our ministers begin to preach about earthly things and earthly philosophies, we should stop listening to them. If our ministers are not preaching about the Christ, about the One Who has come, still comes, and is coming to free us from sin and death, it is a waste of our time to listen to them. There are plenty of so-called self-help gurus who will speak about that hogwash.

No, my dear friends, true preachers preach the Christ Who was crucified for us on the tree of the holy cross. They do not point to themselves, but to the Christ. In this way the way of the Lord is made straight. For it points directly to the means of our redemption from sin and death: it points to the Christ, the One Who comes whose latchet of His shoes we are unworthy to unloose. We are to be pointed toward the Christ, and His holiness and innocence. We are not to be directed to our works, or

our good deeds. We are not to be directed to earthly things, but to heavenly and spiritual things. For these are the things which lead us into heaven, which lead to our eternal home in heaven. Our Lord does prepare a place for us here on this earth, but He prepares a place for us in heaven.

Let us, therefore, my dear friends, hear the voice of the forerunners. For they are here to make straight the way of the Lord in the wilderness of this world. They are not driven to and fro by every false philosophy and theology that comes their way. They are not driven to and fro by what society does, or does not do. They are not dressed in soft raiment, like kings and princes, which are meant to garner favor among their listeners. They do not have to wear camel's hair, with a leather girdle, and eat locusts and wild honey, either. It is not their clothes that make them a man, but what they preach. Like St. John the Baptist, the forerunner, they are to point us to the Christ, and not to themselves, or other men. The forerunner points us to the Christ; to the One Who comes after us to baptize us with water and the Holy Ghost. They point us to the true means of our salvation.

Hear then, my friends, the voice of the one crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord." And let us fix our eyes on our Lord + Jesus, for He is the true, and only, means of our salvation. He has come to us as the Lord God in our flesh, born of His mother St. Mary in the city of David His father, Bethlehem. And He comes to us whenever two or three are gathered together in His Name to bring the means of grace which impart to us forgiveness of our sins, and eternal life and salvation. And He will come again on the Last Day, to take us to our eternal home in heaven, where we will be reunited with all of our loved ones who have gone before us in the faith. This is to Whom we should give all honor, praise, and glory: to the Son of God, the Messiah, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, the One Who comes to redeem us from sin and death. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord + Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same + Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ + Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!