

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, SIGHTHILL

Sunday Service

16 JANUARY 2022

JOHN THE BAPTIST 'RE-LOADED'

To God the Father voices raise
And Holy Spirit let us praise

CCLI Song # 1537753 Charles Coffin | Greg Leavers
| John Chandler | Peter Horrobin

Opening Prayer

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, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

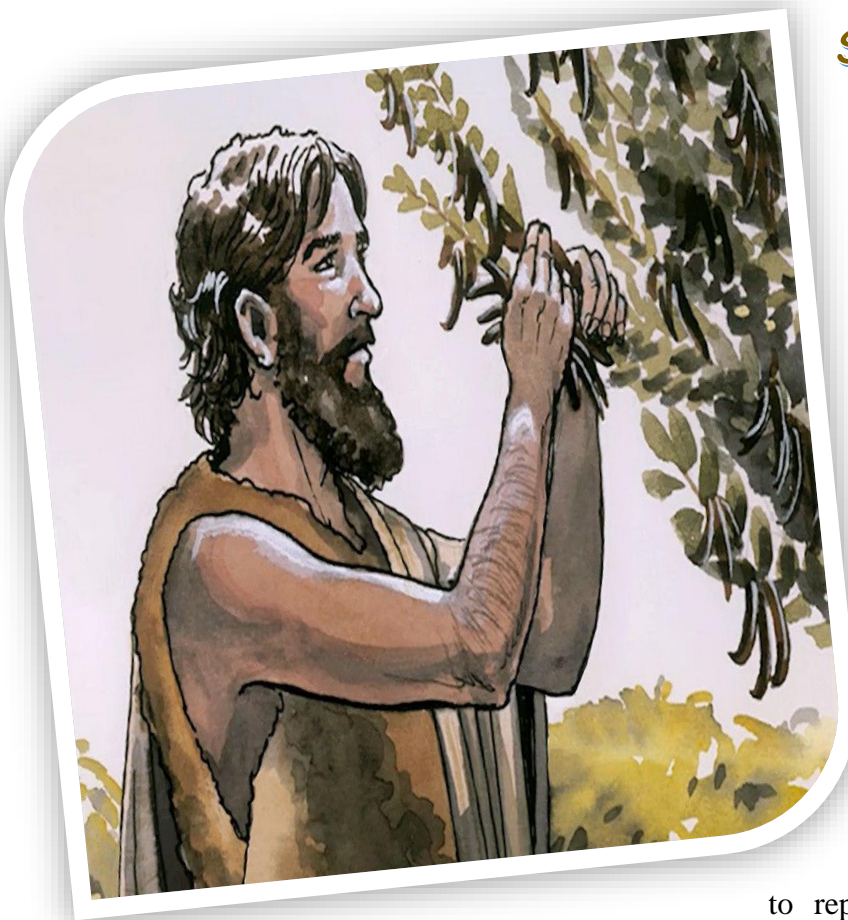
John the Baptist

The birth of John was foretold by an angel to the Lord to his father, Zachary, who was offering incense in the Temple. It was the destiny of John to prepare the way of Christ. Even in the womb, John knew the presence of Jesus and of Mary — leaping with joy at the glad coming of the Son of man. In his youth he remained hidden, because Jesus' life was hidden also.

But before Christ's public life began, a divine impulse led John into the desert where in silence and in prayer, he began to purify his own soul. Then, as crowds broke in upon his solitude, he wanted them to flee from the wrath to come, and gave them the baptism of penance with water, while they confessed their sins. At last there stood in the crowd One whom St. John did not know, until a voice from within told him that it was his Lord, Jesus Christ.

With the baptism of John, Christ began His ministry for the sins of His people, and John saw the Holy Spirit descend in bodily form upon Him. At that point the Saint's work was completed. He had but to point his own disciples to the Lamb of God; he had but to decrease as Christ increased (Jn 3:30). "I told you" he said, "that I am not the Christ." He then saw all men leave him and go to follow Christ.

St. John was beheaded soon after by Herod and his wife, Salome, for boldly rebuking them for their scandalous



Song: Make Way, Make Way – Great tidings
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFx3Ylvp1cl>

Call to worship

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

Isaiah 40:3-5

Hymn: On Jordan's bank the Baptist's Cry
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plr21lLgFpg>

On Jordan's bank the Baptists cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh
Come then and listen for He brings
Glad tidings from the King of kings
Then cleansed be every heart from sin
Make straight the way for God within
Prepare we in our hearts a home
Where such a mighty guest may come
For You are our salvation Lord
Our refuge and our great reward
Without Your grace we waste away
Like flowers that wither and decay
To Him who left the throne of heaven
To save mankind all praise be given

lifestyle of adultery. He died as the first martyr and final prophet about one year before the crucifixion of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Bible Reading; Luke 1:13-17

But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”

Brave John the Baptist (live/second service)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUhRnWerI9A>

Brief Reflection

John is often called the last of the Old Testament Prophets. He appeared in the desert with a new and radical message; the long awaited and promised Messiah was coming, get ready and prepare for him. He was only the messenger; he himself was not the Messiah. His role was to point to Jesus, to lead people to Jesus and to prepare people for Jesus. John was the messenger in time; Jesus is the Word for eternity.

As one gospel tells us, John gave his life ‘to testify to the light.’ He was not worthy to touch the sandals of Jesus. John also gave his life as he prepared a way for the Lord. As John reminded the people of the promise God made to them, he also challenged the way they were living and treating each other. They had broken the covenant God made with them. Their role of the prophet is to preach the word of God without fear and without compromise. In our own time we think of Maximilian Kolbe who gave his life for another prisoner in Auschwitz concentration camp. We think of Martin Luther King who gave his life for racial equality and justice. We remember St. Teresa of Calcutta who spent her whole life serving and loving the poorest people on earth. These and countless other nameless men and women are modern John the Baptist's. They challenge us and they too point and lead us to Jesus.

More than likely, none of us will be asked to give our lives for the gospel. But we are all asked to be messengers by God. Each of us is asked to live, share and proclaim the good with courage and conviction. We are called to live a prophetic life. We are to be inspired, encouraged and challenged by John the Baptist; prophet and messenger of God. Michael Moore OMI (<https://oblates.ie/gospel-reflection-for-the-birth-of-john-the-baptist/>)

Prayer for others

Lord God, who promised Zechariah a son filled with the spirit and power of Elijah, to prepare a people fit for the Lord: we pray for reconciliation between all people. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord God, when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting the baby leapt in her womb: may she who believed your promise be blessed among women, and may we proclaim with joy the good news of your Christ. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord God, at John's birth Zechariah proclaimed he would be the prophet of the Most High: we pray for all who preach the Good News. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord God, when your Son came to the Jordan and was baptized by John, He saw the heavens open and the Spirit descending as a dove: may we who are baptized into your Church faithfully proclaim in the world the words of your beloved Son. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord God, John proclaimed your Son as the Lamb of God and John's disciples followed Jesus: help us to follow him also, and by our words and deeds to bring our families and friends closer to you. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord God, who sent John to witness to the light, to be the voice of one crying in the wilderness and to prepare the way of the Lord: comfort your people and bring your healing to the sick and needy, to the broken-hearted and the oppressed, to prisoners and captives. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord God, John preached the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and suffered imprisonment and death for proclaiming your Law: we remember all who have died in your service, joining our prayers with John the Baptist and all the saints; grant us with them a share in your eternal kingdom. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

God our Father, in your tender compassion the dawn from on high has broken upon us. Shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death and guide our feet into the way of peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

All: Amen.

Closing hymn: Canticles of the turning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trhxP6VAOuc&t=47s>

Benediction: May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all – now and forever. **Amen** (2 Cor 13:14)