

Advent 3
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“John the Baptist’s confession and witness to THE Light, and yours!! (John 1:7)

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LSB 346

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text for this third Sunday of Advent, is from today’s Gospel reading from John 1:7.

“This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him (John the Baptist), might believe.”

Here ends our text.

I. John’s witness and confession

We thank God for the clear and enduring witness of John the Baptist of salvation in Jesus Christ! Let’s first look at his witness and confession of Jesus. He bore witness to THE Light. For there is only one light, Jesus Christ, who illumines the darkness of man’s sin – Jesus is the One who said, **“I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” (John 8:12)**

John the Baptist tells us where life can be found...in the One, and only in the One he is witnessing to – Jesus Christ. John the Baptist was told by God that upon whom the Holy Spirit descends as a dove, this is the One who is the Messiah. So, we hear John speak about what exactly happened at Jesus’ baptism, three verses after our Gospel reading.

And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:32-34)

John tells us that he has seen and testified that Jesus is the Son of God. His firsthand witness of who Jesus is has reached our ears this morning. And by the power of the same Holy Spirit, through John's word, we too, believe that Jesus is the Light of the world, the Son of God.

For God did not mean for John's witness to be heard by only a small select group of people 2000 years ago. Listen again to our text.

“This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.”

John's faithful witness to the Light is for all people. God wants no man to perish. For John tells us of **“the true Light who gives light to every man coming into the world.” (John 1:9)**

All men, of course, are born in the same hopeless predicament, in the darkness of our sin. For Paul tells us in Romans 3:23

“23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

John said he wasn't even worthy to untie Jesus' sandal strap. Nor are we.

But John's message of repentance then showcases the Good News that the Savior has come. John doesn't leave us in despair as we look at our crooked sinful roads and repent. No! He points us to the Lamb as he sees Jesus coming toward him. This is the very next verse, verse 29 that follows our Gospel reading.

“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

“All”, “every”, “world”. John's witness is proclaimed to us who are part of this world in the 21st century!

So too, Paul points us to the Good News after he first told us that we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

“24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,”

In Christ, there is justification by grace...freely through His redemption on the cross.

Thanks be to God, “all” includes you and me. We have believed in this 21st century through John, in the message that has been preserved in God’s word for us to our day.

Thanks be to God, “all” includes baby Asher Grimes who will receive the washing of his sins in Holy Baptism shortly. Asher will receive the same baptism that John baptized the people of his day with for the forgiveness of sins. For we heard last week in St. Mark 1.

“John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” (Mark 1:4)

John witnessed what God had commanded and given to sinful men, that baptism gives remission of sins. And through baptism, Jesus the Light of the world illumines a sinful heart and makes it His glorious home. The Holy Spirit creates a new spirit and calls it His temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16)

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;” (Ephesians 3:14-17)

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:27)

John confessed that he was not the Christ, but a sinful man. John confessed his own unworthiness to Jesus at His baptism.

“I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” (Matthew 3:13)

But, John learned that in order for Jesus to take our place as the innocent sacrificial Lamb, He would have to place Himself under all the ordinances of God to fulfill all righteousness.

So that when Jesus said “It is finished” on the cross, our baptisms unite us to His finished work. His payment of sin becomes our freedom from sin.

Paul makes this connection of our baptism to Jesus’ death and resurrection in Romans 6.

“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Forgiveness, victory over death and the devil, and eternal life are the gifts of baptism that God freely and graciously bestows on us.

John points to Jesus’ coming which gives all these things. So, also we read in Titus 3.

“4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

II. Our witness and confession

All these great blessings form our witness of what God has done for us and what He has made us. For He brought us into His family as His children and made us His heirs! Now, we live new lives in Him. As Luther says in the Small Catechism.

What does such baptizing with water signify?

Answer: It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise; who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

He has made each of us witnesses of His work in us. We are not the voice, for only John had the special role of announcing the Savior’s coming. But we are a voice announcing what the Lamb of God has accomplished, who took away the sin of the world. Our voices repeat the words of John’s witness. For God’s eternal word comes to sinners in our time. And God wants “all” to believe the same message of John the Baptist. Jesus is the true Light who gives light to every man coming into this world. Amen.

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)