

Each year, the following Sunday after Christmas, we start with a new gospel. We've already done Matthew, Mark, Luke, and now we're starting John. And each gospel starts a little differently. The other three start with the birth of Christ. They start with his lineage. They start with who he is, but John, you see, isn't starting that way. He's starting with God.

In the beginning was the word. We read that Wednesday night. In the beginning was God. John sees our relationship with God much differently than everyone else. John talks about the word being made flesh. He talks about God and the idea of the triune God and the idea that the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit are one.

The other three gospels talk about Christ. They talk about Jesus being one of us. They talk about his childhood, his lineage. You talk about everything in that aspect, but John is telling us something different. In our reading today, we're hearing two separate ideas, but they both mean the same thing. John is telling us about God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit. But how is he telling it differently than the others?

Usually, we start with a baptism. We've all heard so many times John the Baptist, being wild and crazy and out, running around yelling and proclaiming that Jesus is coming and baptizing and saving the world. And he's doing that. He's doing that enough that the priest and the Pharisees and the Sadducees and everyone is saying, who is this? And why is he doing it because they're scared? They compare him to the Messiah. And he tells them no. They compare him to Elijah because they think that the prophecy stated in the Book of Micah, where Elijah will come back because they believe Elijah's the Messiah. He did everything that all the Old Testament books said he was going to do, the Messiah was going to do. He raised someone from the dead. He slaughtered hundreds by himself. He ascended into heaven. So it only makes sense that Elijah is going to come back. And Elijah is the only one who should be baptizing people. Because the baptizing that John is doing is a little different than how we do it.

When we do it, we are baptizing a child and for our faith, it's more of a thank you. Other faiths, it's mandatory. You are born with sin and the only way a child is going to live and survive in this world is by being baptized in that sin being removed from them. Other faiths you don't baptize till you find out that you believe in God. You make the choice to be baptized. You make the choice to say I am a servant of the Lord. In our time. Baptism is something completely different. In their time, what John the Baptist is doing is all of those things at once.

He is going out, and he is running around in the wild. And that is weird for them because he is a Levite. His dad was a high priest. He should have a nice cushy job somewhere where he's in a temple and the people come to him. And instead he's going and he's helping everybody. He's going out into the world, and he's saying, I know something you don't. I know the love of God in a way that most of you can't even understand. And who was he telling it to? He's telling it to the Sinners. He's telling it to the prostitutes, the fisherman, the farmers, the slaves, the Gentiles. He's telling it to anybody and everybody who will listen. And when they come to him, he says, I'm going to save you because I can. And that's making people mad. So he tells him, no, I'm not Elijah. I'm not the one who's the Messiah. I'm not the one who's supposed to be doing this. So, then they say, are you the prophet, and that's coming from Deuteronomy? God tells Moses that one day somebody's going to follow him. Somebody's going to lead the slaves again. So he must be him. And he says, no, I'm not him. You people do

not understand. I love God, I know who the Messiah is, I know who is going to save all of us. You haven't seen him, but I am not worthy to untie his sandal.

John doesn't even see himself as a slave. He sees him as less than a slave himself as less than a slave because a slave would be the person who's untying the sandals. He would be somebody that'd be an authority with it, And he's not. He sees himself as somebody that's just a person. Somebody like the rest of us. He does things a little differently, but he is telling the world how great God is. And that the Messiah is already there. And he's telling them God has been made flesh. He's not telling him about his cousin. He's not telling him about his best friend. He's telling them about God that God has come to us in human form, and that the Holy Spirit has descended upon him. He doesn't talk about himself, baptizing Jesus. He's telling them that he has seen it. He has seen the Holy Spirit come down, and now the three of them are one. That God is walking among us, that Jesus is the Christ who will die for us, and that the Holy Spirit is going to be baptizing all of us through him?

And that's not what people want to hear. That's a lot like today, people don't want to hear the good that we do in Christ's name. They don't understand it. They don't understand that there are people out there in need, and that we who have so little are willing to help them. They don't understand that. They don't understand the goodness that all of us have within us, because it's not a part of who they are.

Yes, they've been baptized. They've been confirmed. They've been saved. They go to church every Sunday. They write in their checkbook and make themselves feel good about the work that they do, but they don't understand the people that are downstairs bagging food for the Feeding the Kids. They don't understand that work.

They don't understand the people of Greater Love. They don't understand that because they don't follow their faith that they're still sharing God's love. They don't get it and they want to silence those people. They want to silence us. They want to make us feel bad. They want to make us feel bad because we're different, but we express our love in a way that so many people can't understand.

We're doing the same thing as John did. We are not going through and baptising people, but we are sharing our love in our actions and we are sharing how great God is in our faith. And it's a wonderful thing to think about, because now we're going into a new calendar year.

We are going into a year where people are going to be saying, I make a resolution. I'm going to go to church more often. We don't have to say that. I make a resolution, I'm going to give more to this. I don't have to say that, none of us do. I make a resolution that I'm going to help people. We already do that, too.

And what's the biggest problem with resolutions? They break. They always get broken. It's real, easy to go to church for two weeks at the beginning of the year. It's real, easy to write a check once a month, and then you forget. But we choose to show God's love all the time. We choose To be more like John the Baptist, and we get to choose to continue to do that. We don't need the resolution. We don't need something to say, hey, we're going to do this because it's good. We're saying we're doing this in spite of it being good. We're doing this in spite of people coming at us and telling us that we shouldn't be doing these things. And we shouldn't be who we are. We're doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do.

Let us pray.