

Zephaniah 3:14-20
Isaiah 12:2-6 (In place of Psalm)
Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:7-18

Sermon December 12th, 2021

Sometimes We Need a John in Our Life

As we get closer to Christmas, we have seen the advertising industry ramp up their Christmas ad campaign (**Image**). Targeting children. parents. Grandparents. People in marriages, partnerships, and dating relationships. The most common phrase we hear from our children these days is “I want that, and that, and that, and that...” The most common phrase we hear from our adult loved ones is “I could sure use this” or “this would really look good on me”. Hopefully, you are listening for those hints as you get ready to do your Christmas shopping.

Unfortunately, being bombarded with all this advertising makes it more difficult for us to think of people outside of our family circle. We can become self-obsessed with our own wants and needs, as well as those in our family (**Image**).

Sometimes we need a John in our life to redirect our attention to those in our community who are suffering from inequities. Those in our community who are suffering from injustice. Sometimes we need a John in our life to remind us of what it means to be part of a community.

In our gospel this morning, John the Baptist (**Image**) is confronted by a lot of people who are too focused on their self-interests. Tax collectors who take more than they need. Soldiers who exploit the poor for their own benefit. John uses this opportunity to redirect their attention to what God has envisioned for us.

Living in a just society. Where we share with those in need. Where we help fix the social inequities in our community. Where we act justly with one another.

This is the advice John gives to the tax collectors and soldiers, as John tries to prepare the way for Jesus to come and enact this just society. A society Jesus calls the kingdom of God.

Advent and Christmas are more than seasons where we take advantage of discounts on winter vacations, diamonds, toys, gadgets, tools, and the latest fashion designs (**Image**). Advent and Christmas are about the hope and celebration of God’s justice for our world.

In our annual Christmas story that we will hear once again on Christmas Eve, Jesus’ birth gives hope to poor shepherds that Jesus will be there for the poor. Meeting their needs. Giving them a voice. Helping them experience justice from their oppression.

Inviting the people he meets, to live as a community where poor people have access to the same services as those who are not poor (**Image**). Including access to justice.

Advent is a season where we hope in Jesus' return to our world, because we believe that when Jesus comes again, God's justice will come in its fullness. Making everything right.

With this spirit of Advent and Christmas dwelling in our hearts we are invited to look outside of ourselves and our family circles. We are invited to see those people in our community who are in need. We are invited to share of what God has given us. We are invited to help fix the social inequities in our community. We are invited to participate in God's justice for the world.

When I think of John the Baptist, I can't help but also think of John Lennon (**Image**). Another John who had no affiliation with the church, but really drove home the message of Christmas in his famous song Happy Xmas. He starts it off with a question for us to ponder: So, this is Christmas, what have we done...He then goes on to encourage us to speak and act in ways that help us live in Christmas peace with one another. To stop fighting with each other. To stop creating inequities in our society. To quit treating people unfairly. To treat those who live in poverty the same way we would treat our loved ones at the Christmas dinner table (**Image**). To be the community Christ envisions for us.

Over the years this song has helped redirect my attention to the main theme of our Advent and Christmas seasons. To share with those in need in our community. To participate in God's justice for the world.

Sometimes we need a John in our life to remind us of this message.

Let us pray...gracious God, we give thanks for John's message that helps us reconnect with your generosity and justice. Encourage us through this generosity and justice to be generous and act justly to others. Helping those in need in our community to have a merry Christmas right along side the rest of us. **Amen.**

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