

“Being a Good Witness 见证 about Jesus” (Series on John #3)

For New Horizon URC, by Pastor Rand Lankheet, March 5, 2017, first service

Text: John 1:6-8; 19-34

Before reading: Two men with the same name “John.” There is John, the writer of this book. He was one of the 12 disciples of Jesus. Then, another John. This John is often called “John the Baptist.” Because he baptized (施洗) Jesus with water. Today, we are reading about John the Baptist. **[Read.]**

Introduction and point 1: You probably have never been a witness in a court of law (法庭) . I have

never been a witness in a courtroom, in a trial (审判) . But you probably have seen court room scenes depicted on television and in films. The most important thing about a witness is this: the witness had directly see something or hear something which supports the evidence. A witness cannot give second-hand hearing, something repeated by someone else.

A witnesses can only testify about what they have seen heard “first hand.” /

As John writes his gospel account about Jesus, he brings forth a witness. The first person to directly testify about Jesus as a grown man. That witness is John, the Baptizer.

We note **4 things** about his witness:

1. Note the COMMISSION (使命) , the commission John received, to be a witness. [Read 1:6. Very simply, John the Baptizer was “sent from God.” “Sent.” It’s the same Greek verb, from which we get our word, “apostle.” (使徒) It means: one who is sent, sent out.

So John was sent, sent out by God the Father.

And John was sent not to talk about himself or his work, as he lived in the wilderness area. No. Rather, he was sent, sent out, to talk about Jesus. [Read 1:7. Specifically, to testify, to be a witness about, Jesus. The Light who shines in the darkness of the world of sin. Jesus, the Light who shines so people might see who they are, as people. Without hope in themselves;

And Jesus who then shines, showing himself to be Saviour救主. To give people hope. John is a key witness, as though this were a court of law. And as we said earlier, for any good witness it is important that they have heard things or saw things directly, first hand. Of course, it is also important that a witness is credible (可信的) , with good character. Both things are true for John: He saw Jesus with his own eyes. John heard Jesus’ words, directly.

And John is a credible witness, with good character. We’re told that he’s been living out in the desert wilderness. He’s not worried about making money, or living high, or eating fancy meals. Everything we read about John, here and in the other 3 gospels, points to his good character. In fact, we later read that this John was willing to die for his beliefs. He did die.

So John was commissioned be God, to testify about Jesus. As though he were in a court of law. To be a good witness. About Jesus. Why was John testifying about Jesus?

[Look again at vs. 7. Read.

“so that through him [through John] all men [all kinds of people] **might believe.**” Believe. That means, putting their personal trust, in this Jesus.

Application: We today can never be John. Why not? Well, for one thing, we probably will never see Jesus with our eyes. Not in this life. / Nor do we have the same commission as John, to the first one who testifies about Jesus. Nor will we live in a desert wilderness.

But there are some points of similarity between us and John. What are those similarities?

Well, the Bible says that all of us must speak about Jesus to others. We sometimes refer to that as doing “evangelism.” (传道) But we can have some wrong ideas about doing

“evangelism.” Today, we often think of evangelism as a special program of the church. Some organized program. Like, maybe, going door to door in the neighbourhood.

But what we are talking about here, is speaking simple words about Jesus as your Saviour.

As opportunities arise. Even if it is just saying some very simple things.

For example, you can tell someone you will be praying for them. Especially if they are facing some problem in their life. Or, you can ask someone if they have a Bible. If not, you can get them one. We have free Bibles, New Testaments,...

When you give people a Bible, suggest that they read this book of John. Directly learning about Jesus. So those are two easy things you can do, as a witness, for Jesus.

Don't make it too complicated or technical. Just say something simple about Jesus. In

that way, you are doing something similar to what John did.

2. Note the *COURAGE* of John. His courage, his bravery, in his testifying about Jesus.

[Look at verse 19. The Jews in Jerusalem sent “priests and Levites 利未人” to ask John who he was, and what he was doing. Those were the “religious leaders” of that day.

And Jerusalem, of course, was the centre of Jewish worship, with the Temple there.

Later, vs. 24, the Pharisees (法利赛人) also come out to the wilderness area, to question John.

All those leaders are coming to investigate. Now, that could be a bit frightening.

-But John records this in vs. 20: “that John [John the Baptizer] did not fail to confess, **but confessed freely.**” Freely, without compromise (妥协) .

Among other things, this tells us John showed **courage** in his testimony about Jesus.

John did not keep quiet. Nor did he compromise. Oh, John was waiting for Jesus himself to more fully and perfectly reveal himself. John told those religious leaders: “No, I am not the one. I am not the Christ.” [Meshiach, Messiah, Anointed One.]

-In vs. 29, John testifies even more directly: He says, to the Jewish crowds, including some of those religious authorities: “Look, Behold---the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” There He is,” says John, “there is Christ Jesus.”

Appl: That takes some courage. Even today. Courage to testify about Jesus as your Saviour. Jesus, the one who takes away the sin of the world.

Sometimes, it is easier to testify about Jesus to complete strangers, than it is to our own family members and closest friends. What do you risk with a complete stranger? You don't have to deal with them again, if you don't want to. But, to testify about Jesus to your own family, and your close friends? That takes extra courage. Because they might get upset, they might distance (保持距离) themselves from you, even for a time.

But the Bible tells us we must be courageous in our talking about Jesus.

Oh, the Bible says we also have to be gentle and wise, when we talk about Jesus.

Many new Christians are not gentle in their witness. You?

But the point is this: we must not be afraid, to say something about Jesus.

Let me ask: to whom can you speak, this week? Don't be afraid! Find the courage...

3. A third thing, about John's testimony.

[Look at verse 23. The quote comes from the book of Isaiah, chapter 40.

John is “crying out” or “**calling out**” in the wilderness. That is, he is speaking in a loud voice.

Again---this is something unique to John's calling, as a witness about Jesus. It's not part of our witness today. We today are not shouting about Jesus with a loud voice.

Now, we don't have time to go into detail. But in Jewish thought, the prophet Elijah was

believed to someday come back to earth. He would come back just before this Anointed One (受膏者), the Messiah (弥赛亚), would appear on earth.

So, the Jewish leaders first ask John if he might be Elijah. “No,” says John. But, in another sense, John was Elijah. Jesus himself says that, later on. John the Baptizer was like Elijah in that he was sent to unbelieving Israel. Ruled at that time by a wicked, unbelieving King. So John the Baptizer, came to the unbelieving Jewish people. The king at that time, was Herod. Known as a deceiving, wicked man. Elijah’s purpose was to bring the people back to God. To show them their sin, and lead them to repent of their sin.

In those ways, John was like the OT prophet Elijah.//

So John was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah. Isaiah wrote that about 750 years earlier. About someone out in the desert wilderness. Someone to prepare the way for Jesus.

Now John understood. And John obeyed in giving testimony about Jesus.

So he cried out, with a loud voice--as part of his unique testimony about Jesus.

-And John fulfilled his calling, also as he baptized Jesus with water. Please understand that this was not Christian baptism. Why not? Because it was not applied in Jesus’ name, or in the name of the Triune (三位一体的) God. We are commanded to baptize today in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. /

But washing or sprinkling with water was part of Old Testament ritual (礼仪, 仪式). It pointed forward

to the fulfilling of God’s plan of redemption (救赎). For example, in the book of Ezekiel, we read this. Chapter 36:24. God says to His people: “***I will sprinkle clean water on you*** and you will be clean...I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you...”

Jesus didn’t need a new heart. But by being baptized, Jesus was showing that God’s plan for Israel was being fulfilled. The new age of redemption has come.

-That water is also a sign of the Spirit. So we read in vs. 32, that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. By the power of the Spirit, Jesus will be empowered to fulfill His calling on earth. /

4. There’s one more point to be made, about our testifying about Jesus today.

Notice that John is testifying *very clearly*. There’s a **CLARITY** about his testimony of Jesus. And I want us to focus on two things here: a) John clearly testifies that Jesus is the

Lamb of God. b) And at the end of this section, John is clear that Jesus is the **Son of God.**

4.A. Let’s start with the testimony **that Jesus is the “SON OF GOD.”** [Read vs. 34.]

John says: “I have seen and I testify that this {Jesus} is the Son of God.”

John is an eyewitness. He sees it with his own eyes.

John says God had revealed that to him. God revealed to John that he someday would see a special man. That man would have the Spirit come down on him. Then John would know that man indeed is the Son of God.

The other gospel writers tell us that when Jesus was baptized, they all heard a voice from heaven. That voice said: “This is my Son, whom I love.” It was the voice of God the Father.

-So, with his own eyes, John saw the Spirit come down on Jesus.

-And with his own ears, John heard that voice from heaven, the voice of God the Father.

-So John knew, beyond a shadow of doubt, that this man, Jesus, indeed was the Son of God.

So he could give witness. John could testify to others, about Jesus.

Appl: In our testifying about Jesus to unbelievers today, people might not start with that belief.

That might not believe that Jesus is God’s Son. That’s alright. We must start wherever people are at. Remember God is stronger than peoples’ doubts or their questions. If at first someone can only think of Jesus as a good teacher, or a prophet, start at that point with them. Many

Jews in John's day first thought Jesus might be a prophet. But, over time, God caused them to see more...to learn more...to actually come to trust in Jesus as God's very own Son. Sent from God the Father.

-Start where people are at...with their own ideas about Jesus. Let the Word convince (说服) them.

4.B. John is also clear about Jesus' work--the essential part of his work. [Read vs. 29.

John testifies that Jesus is "***the Lamb of God*** who takes away the sin of the world!"

Remember, John is speaking to Jews, Jews who for thousands of years were sacrificing lambs, and goats, and bulls. All those animal sacrifices.

But Jesus has been sent from God, to be ***the LAMB***. The **SPECIAL** Lamb.

This is not a lamb from someone's flock. No, this is the Lamb ***of God***--the Lamb ***from*** God.

The Lamb on whom our sins would be laid. The Lamb that God the Father would kill on the altar of the cross. Why? To pay for our sin. Not only to pay for the sins of the Jewish people...but to pay for all kinds of people, around the world. Jews, and non-Jews alike. //

Appl: So much could be said about how we must testify to unbelievers today. In Toronto, in our neighbourhoods, at school, at work. This past week I met someone who read the Bible. Who knows many good things about God, about Jesus. But, when I asked a bit, he really didn't know that Jesus fully and completely will take away his sin. Forgiven. He hoped someday to be in heaven. But he said that he might not make it. He just didn't know.

What a message, what a witness, we can give today, to all kinds of people! It's good news!!

Most people know that they have many faults, failures, even sins.

Most people today feel guilty. Most people are afraid of death.

What an opportunity to speak to them about Jesus. As the one, the only one, who will take away their sin. Who will take away their punishment, their condemnation (定罪) .

-For us, this morning...the Lord's Supper. Jesus, the Lamb of God... +

As we eat and drink, we celebrate. The Lord's Supper is a celebration...of the forgiveness of all our sin through the shed blood of Jesus. **LET US PRAY.**