

Empire Church of the Brethren

## *Sunday Service Sermons*

**10 December 2023**

God's Affirmative Action Program: The Revelation

Text: "There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light, he came only as a witness to the light".

*John 1:6-8*

Revelation is a word we use to describe the disclosure of the truth.

The first chapter of the book of John presents a great revelation: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us".

Unlike the other gospel writers, John did not start his book with the scenes of Christ's birth. Instead, he started at the very beginning.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".

As a part of his affirmative action program, God became one of us.

Through his Son, Jesus, God came into the world to fulfill his plan to bring people back to himself and provide all humankind with an equal opportunity for reconciliation with him.

In our Scripture reading today, we learn that God chose John the Baptist to act as a witness to this great revelation.

John was the instrument of God's revelation.

John's commission.

John was an instrument to reveal God's plan of reconciliation.

John's birth was no accident.

Notice how the gospel expresses it: "There was a man sent from God whose name was John".

John was under commission from God himself.

*John 18* tells us that John the Baptist was called to reveal the Promised One sent by God.

God sent a man to tell us that he had sent his Son.

This was John's commission.

John's mission.

John was also a man on a mission.

He was called to bear witness to the light that would shine in the world. Notice that the gospel makes a clear distinction between Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, and John the Baptist, who was sent to bear witness to the light.

John's mission was to introduce people to the one whose light could lead them into life.

John's submission.

John submitted to God's awesome plan for his life.

"He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him all might believe."

Through his witness, many people came to faith in Jesus Christ and accepted him as their personal Savior.

Like John, we too are called to be instruments of God and to bear witness to his Son.

Jesus was the Light of God's revelation.

John the Baptist was not the light that would illuminate the world.

But he would bear witness to the true light that would illuminate the darkened lives of people everywhere.

Have you ever stood in the pitch blackness, trying to get your bearings, when suddenly a flash of

light illuminated the area sufficiently for you to see where you were?

God's light flashes into our lives in Jesus Christ.

William Barclay has listed three areas where the light of Jesus Christ illuminates the shadows of life.

First: is doubt.

Many people doubt that they can know God.

God seems so unreal and so unknowable to them.

But Christ's coming into the world has removed the shadow of doubt.

We don't have to wonder if God is real or what he is like.

We have Jesus Christ to show us the character of God.

Since the Word was with God from the very beginning and the Word was God himself, then the Word is what God is.

Any doubts we may have had about God are gone.

We can know God.

Second is despair.

The world into which Jesus came was filled with despair.

But Jesus gave hope.

With Christ we have forgiveness, strength, and help for living.

Christ's light dispels despair.

We no longer have to live in despair with no hope or help.

Third is death.

The ancient world feared death.

At best, death was annihilation.

At worst, death was torture by whatever gods there were.

People were afraid of these possibilities.

But Jesus, through his coming, his life, his death, and his resurrection, revealed that death was only the way to a larger life.

People did not have to fear death any longer.

Christ defeated death, and we can live in that victory.

God's revelation is inclusive.

Notice how inclusive God's revelation is: "so that through him all might believe."

The ancient world was rather exclusive.

The Jews hated the Gentiles and the Gentiles stayed away from the Jews.

The Greeks were smug and narcissistic, considering themselves far superior in knowledge and intellect; they raised their noses in disdain at the boorishness of other cultures.

The Roman world despised the other peoples whose language they did not understand and called the barbarians.

But Christ's coming gave light to everyone.

Notice the implications of this fact.

Witness.

John's witness was for all people; he was to tell the world that Jesus Christ gave both life and light.

God's love and forgiveness are for everyone.

Missions.

No person or nation is outside the circle of God's love.

The Christmas season is a perfect time to think about missions because Christ's coming into the world assures us that God's love and salvation are intended for all the world.

A missions volunteer once testified that one of the things that sharpened her call to missions was observing a door with an electric eye on a department store while Christmas shopping.

She noticed that the door opened for anyone who came to it.

Any person who broke the beam of the electric eye could enter the store.

Similarly, she realized, the doors of the kingdom of heaven open to any person who approaches them.

God's love is for everyone.

That is the basis for missions.

During the Christmas season, we remember God's affirmative action program.

God took affirmative action in sending his Son, Jesus, into the world to make himself known to us and to die on the cross to redeem us from our sin.

John the Baptist was a witness to this revelation.

He revealed God's plan for humankind as he pointed to the Christ.

How will we respond to this revelation?

Will we join John and declare to our world that Jesus is God's answer to each person's struggles and questions?