

## Sermon for Advent IV – John 1:19-28

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Advent is the season of hearing of Christ's coming to us. Christ indeed comes to us every Lord's day in His Work and Sacraments. This is the heart of Advent. A secondary meaning to Advent is the time of preparation for Christmas. We anticipate with joy the Christmas message: "Unto you is born a Savior." As children of God we remind ourselves of this truth by singing God's praises: "Savior of the Nations, come, Virgin's Son, make here your home! Marvel now, O heav'n and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth."

To prepare us in keeping the festival of Christ's birth, we must know ourselves and we must know Christ. In one respect, this is just what the priests and Levites sent from Jewish Pharisees wanted to know. A man preaches with great authority and conviction in the wilderness. Was he the Great Prophet of our times? Was he Elijah come back to us? Was he the Christ? Speculation swirled in the minds and hearts of the people.

John the Baptist gives us his testimony about who he is and who the Christ is. He is not the Christ. He is not Elijah. He is not the prophet. He is the voice of the one crying out in the desert to make straight the way of the Lord. He is unworthy of the Christ. But he also testifies to the Christ: He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

But how do you answer these questions? Who are you? What do you say about yourself? The answer from everyone will be: "I am a sinner." This is the first step that John assists us with in making straight the way of the Lord. We confess and do not deny it: "I am a sinner." And it's true. We have done much to weaken and hurt our relationship with God. Our flesh is weak with sin. The old man in us must be killed daily. But all our heart and all our life should belong to God! Every sin is a "no" to being God's child. Have you walked the way God calls you to? Have you lived according to His Word, or have you fallen into previous sins that you used to do? Have you done that which your conscience previously told you was wrong?

Dearly beloved, we require nothing of you except honesty, just like John the Baptizer. We know we are lost sinners; but we also know, God be praised, who redeems lost sinners. John the Baptizer still does his work: he removes the obstacles so that we can see and know our need, and he also points to set our eyes

on the One who redeems, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." God grants this blessing to you today. He makes it vivid for your conscience. For in Bethany, across the Jordan, the same village where John was baptizing, expensive ointment was used to prepare Christ for burial by anointing His feet. Those very feet, whose sandal strap John and every other man were unworthy to untie, those very feet would be pierced with a nail to bind them to a cross.

And they testified against Him—those priests and Levites and Pharisees. He was struck with their hand, even though they could bear witness to no wrong that He did or said. He was the Christ, the Messiah, and His kingdom was not of this world. They crucified Him. They thought He was calling out to Elijah, that Elijah might save Him, but instead He was calling out to His Father, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He was indeed the Prophet whose final prophecy was greatest and best: "It is finished."

You know this Christ. And Christ knows you. He baptized you with water and the Holy Spirit. The old man in you was drowned. The new man is raised. And through repentance and faith, this happens for you on a daily basis. Christ knows you.

Know Him better today and receive Him with joy in His Word and Sacrament. Know Him better in two days from now when we are gifted with Him again on Christmass. There is no sin that He cannot remove. He has atoned for every wrong. Just follow John's finger. Acknowledge your need. Don't continue in your old ways, but go to Christ. If you can't go, call out to Him. If you can't call out, then listen. "Behold, He stands among you." Don't let it be said that you do not know Him. Know Him in His Body and Blood. Put the Mass back in Christmas. Sing the song of Christmas again, "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate Deity." See to it that your confession is this: I am a sinner, but thanks be to God, I also have a Savior. I hold to Him! Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠