

Rev. Luke C. Werre
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Advent 3

John 1:6-8, 19-28

IT'S NOT ABOUT ME, IT'S ABOUT CHRIST!

Some miraculous aspects about the 2000-year-old tool that we call the Apostles Creed are its completeness, its conciseness and its precision in expressing the true faith about the true God. But there's another thing that makes it an even more remarkable – actually it's something *missing* from the creed: any mention of me. Yes, it does begin “I believe,” but the entire focus of what we believe is God and Christ. Think of how it speaks about the work of Christ –that He was conceived, born, suffered, died and rose again. It's all what He did. My salvation, my getting into heaven depends entirely on Him. It's not about me, it's about Christ.

In the Gospel Lesson today, John made a similar confession. It says, “*He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely.*” “To confess” literally means “to agree” or “to say the same thing as.” When we confess our sins we are agreeing, saying the same thing that God says about us. When we confess our faith we are saying the same thing that God says about our salvation in Christ.

To confess what God says about Christ –to say the same thing to the rest of the world –that's our purpose for being here.

John the Baptist's confession of faith might strike us as rather odd. We read, “*Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, 'I am not the Christ.'*” That might seem a little backwards. “Don't tell us who you're not, John, tell us who Christ is.” But it was necessary for John to say this because many people were trying to put the focus on John. It had been some 400 years since the last book of the Old Testament had been written –the book of Malachi. Many of the people had all

but given up on the Messiah. Then from out of nowhere comes this preacher, this baptizer, with the look and severity and impact of one of the ancient prophets. Could it be that this was the one?

John became such a sensation that the leaders from temple headquarters sent a delegation to grill him as to who he was. We are told, “*John confessed freely, 'I am not the Christ.' Then they asked him, 'Then who are you? Are you Elijah?'*” They knew their Bibles. It's true, the prophet Malachi wrote that Elijah would come before Christ. John dressed, lived and preached like the Elijah from Old Testament history. But He was not Elijah in a superstitious, reincarnation sense. And they seemed to want to equate Elijah with the Messiah. So in order to keep the focus off himself, John said, “*I am not.*” In other words, “*It's not about me.*”

“*Then they asked, 'Are you the Prophet?'*” It's true, Moses, in the book of Deuteronomy had promised that God would send them a prophet to whom they should listen. But the prophet God promised was Christ Himself. So John flat out answered, “*No.*”

We read, “*Finally, they said, 'Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?'* John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘*I am the voice of one calling in the desert, Make straight the way for the Lord.*’” So it's all about the Lord. With that one verse of Scripture, John confessed “It's not about me. It's about Christ.” That was John's way. Notice how he kept the focus on Christ even in the nitty gritty of His daily ministry: “*Now some Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, 'Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?'* ‘*I baptize with water,*’ John replied, ‘*But among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.*’ This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

We can talk like John. I speak with words. I baptize with water. I give you bread and wine. But the person you are to know is Christ. It is His words you are hearing, His forgiveness washing you clean, His body and blood you are receiving.

John understood his job of confessing Christ very well. Imagine something like this beautiful description of him being printed on your headstone someday, *“There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.”* Nothing better could be said about a believer and what they accomplished here on earth.

To be like John is to have as your life’s motto, “It’s not about me, it’s about Christ.” The more we taste this truth for ourselves, the more powerfully the Holy Spirit will confirm us to confess Christ.

When you have heavy regrets or feel ashamed of something –too dirty to come to the Lord’s Table, then you remember, “It’s not about me. It’s about Christ.” He died and washed me clean and removed all my guilt forever. When you are sick or in pain and see no end to it, you remember “It’s not about me. It’s about Christ.” He rose from the dead to assure me a new and glorified body like His own. When someone is insensitive to you, or you feel very alone you remember, “It’s not about me. It’s about Christ.” His body and blood and our intimate fellowship in Him supply what feels to be missing from my life. When you are pressed by nagging temptation, bordering on despair, when you are not sure of yourself or are simply too exhausted to pay attention to detail any more, when you feel it’s a lost cause to ever be of a right heart and mind with God, then remember, “It’s not about me. It’s about Christ.” On the strength of His promises I will prevail. When you are wondering what use you are to anybody anymore, remember, “It’s not about me. It’s about Christ.” He paid more for me than all the gold and silver in the world –His own blood. God values me.”

Being strengthened personally by this truth will transform you to be able confess Christ to others whether Christians or non-Christians, family or strangers. If my focus is to tell people about *my* faith, and what *my* faith means to *me* and how *my* faith helped me and how *I* feel about it, they can easily retort, “Well, that’s fine for you!” But instead of “I” and “me” and “my,” you can use

“Christ:” *“You know, Christ takes care of that. Christ promises this. Christ solves that. Christ says this.”* I’m not here to tell people about me. It’s not about me. It’s about Christ.”

Keeping Christ as our focus whether at Christmas or any other time of the year will not only keep us richly supplied with God’s comfort, it will make us into confessors like John to fulfill our God-given purpose here on earth.