

## **John: A Prophet in the Womb**

Scripture: Luke 1:39 – 55

Last week we started our Advent sermon series and we looked at Elizabeth's Example and Zechariah's Curse'. Today let us discuss John the Baptist who was a prophet even before he was born. John the Baptist was a prophet from his mother's womb!

When we think of John the Baptist we tend to think of a grown prophet crying in the wilderness dressed in a camel hair tunic and eating locusts and wild honey. John was leading an ancient revival for piety and he was feeding the spiritual hunger in his day. John was untamed and he offered a call to repent! He wanted everyone to repent in preparation for the coming Messiah who John said he was unfit to even tie his sandals. John was the fearless prophet of the day. He was not the one everybody expected.

If you went to the River Jordan to hear John talk, you would receive the same message day after day – repent, repent, repent. I have often wanted to preach like John the Baptist. Find one theme and hammer away at week after week.

On the second Sunday of Advent, let us look at John the Baptist before he was born. Let us look at him still in his mother's womb.

John was a hidden miracle child because Elizabeth had secluded herself for the first five delicate months of labor. Remember, for her to have a child at her age was very uncommon. Then, in Elizabeth's sixth month of labor, Mary comes to visit Elizabeth. Mary is just newly pregnant and when she comes to visit Elizabeth, something amazing happens!

John the Baptist, in Elizabeth's womb, proclaims that the child Mary is carrying is a very special child. John leaped in Elizabeth's womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she proclaimed aloud – *'Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord has come to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greetings, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'*

Yes, John the Baptist, from the womb proclaims God's glory in Jesus Christ.

This is no doubt that this scene offers us much to ponder. Here we have Elizabeth six months pregnant with John inside of her and we have Mary just made pregnant by the angel Gabriel. Mary approaches Elizabeth and John stirs within her womb. And Elizabeth says those wonderful words. Listen to those words again - *'Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord has come to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greetings, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'*

What a magnificent proclamation!

A good place to start exploring this scene is with these remarkable women who were about to play a central role in the redemption of the world by giving birth to the long awaited prophet who would prepare the way and the long awaited Messiah who would save the world.

At the sound of Mary's voice, John leaped in the womb. And with this leaping in the womb, John announces Jesus' arrival in their house. This third trimester baby in Elizabeth's womb leaps upon hearing Mary's voice. Months before his birth, John is already living into this call as the one who would proclaim the Messiah! Even before his birth, John is preparing the way for the One who would send the Holy Spirit.

The encounter between these mothers was a profound moment in salvation history. Elizabeth, the old and formerly barren woman, was now carrying the one who would be known as the forerunner of the Messiah. Mary, a young virgin, was carrying the Messiah.

One mother announced the arrival of the Messiah in her house, the other mother came full of grace and she sang a song declaring the long history of God's saving acts.

Once to share this song by Mary, I asked a pregnant woman to read it in front of the congregation. But since we do not have a pregnant woman in the BBCC (DOC), my wife will read Mary's song –

*My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm and He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel. In remembrance of his mercy and according to the promise He made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.*

Truly in these words, one can feel the weight of history hanging on this encounter. One can feel that at this moment, the world would be changed!

Three months later, things did begin to change. John was born and in that joyous event, the newest prophet has come.

John was the first to recognize the Messiah. John recognized the Messiah while he was still in his mother's womb.

May we recognize the Messiah each and every day during Advent. May we fulfill the calling on our lives from birth to serve our Lord & Savior, Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

O God, may you call each of us to serve you in this world. May you give us the gifts we need to find our place in this world. May we fulfill the calling to share the good news of Jesus Christ. And may we point to the mystery of God's loving presence among us. AMEN.

