

Advent Devotional December 11, 2022

Scripture

John 3:22-30

22 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he spent some time there with them and baptized. 23 John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim because water was abundant there; and people kept coming and were being baptized 24 — John, of course, had not yet been thrown into prison. 25 Now a discussion about purification arose between John's disciples and a Jew. 26 They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing, and all are going to him." 27 John answered, "No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. 28 You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent ahead of him.' 29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason, my joy has been fulfilled. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease."

Devotional

The Rev. Robin Sharp '18

On the surface this scripture lesson seems straightforward. The Baptist's followers are concerned that more people are going to "the other guy" to be baptized instead of to John. Of course, looking at the text from our perspective we know who they are going to: the Messiah, known as Jesus. Throughout his mission, John proclaimed he was not the light, but he came to testify to that light (John 1:8). As the ministry of Jesus was growing, John knew his was going to diminish—and he was joyful about it.

I could not help thinking about this at a personal level. As Jesus becomes more central to our lives, we are made new, we are reformed. 1 John 2:17 tells us "the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever." For each of us that means as we allow the light of Christ to glow and grow within, that which keeps us from fully knowing Christ—sin—must decrease. In other words, the Jesus in us must increase, as the "I" within us must decrease.

The end of the poem *Thou Shalt Know Him When He Comes*, by Mark Sirett, reads

"But his coming known shall be,
By the holy harmony
Which his coming makes in thee."

As that Holy Harmony increases in each of us, how can we not be joyful?!

Prayer

Oh, Holy Harmony! Thank you for your dramatic disruption to our lives. As we respond to the "you" abiding in us, we can not help but be joyous at the new persons we become. During this season of Advent, help us to focus on the ministry of the "you", and less on the desires of the "I". Amen.