

Second Sunday in Advent  
December 4, 2016

Text: Matthew 3:1-12

Theme: “For Crying Out Loud!”

When Nancy and I sit down for any extended period of time (more than 15 minutes) in front of the TV we tend to fall asleep. Usually this is not a big deal, though it can be depending upon what you are watching. We often watch Dancing With the Stars. We like to watch the dances and then replicate what we have seen during the commercials (not really, of course). The struggle is staying awake. Usually if Nancy falls asleep before I do, I just let her sleep, and she is okay with that. But one night we were watching DWTS and she fell asleep before the final dance and before the announcement of who was eliminated. I let her sleep, but turns out she wasn't happy about that. I needed one of these (megaphone), and I could have cried out loud, “wake up.”

“For crying out loud—why didn't you wake me?” One could also hear, “For crying out loud—why all this racket?” “For crying out loud” can be an expression of annoyance or surprise. “For crying out loud...why are you wearing that shirt?...Why did you decide to invite that many people?...Why did you run up such a credit card bill?” “For crying out loud, just stop it!”

It's the second Sunday in Advent. On this Sunday we always hear John's cry. He was certainly crying out loud. He cries out loud there in the wilderness along the Jordan River. It had been quite for quite a long time,

more than 50 years. It was the time of the *Pax Romana*, the Peace of Rome. It began when Octavian became the sole leader in Rome in 27 BC. He was given the title of Caesar Augustus. Luke tells us (Luke 3:1) that John begins this crying out loud in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius Caesar, Augustus' successor. This was a good quiet in many ways. There was no sound of armies or invaders in the land—no chariot wheels turning, horses galloping, boots marching into battle.

And there was quiet in another way. It seemed that God was quiet. It had been 400 years since He had last spoken through a prophet, that prophet being Malachi. Malachi had spoken of a coming crier, a messenger to prepare the way for the Lord. Yes, that was 400 years ago. All was quiet in the wilderness along the Jordan.

But that is about to change. “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea.” (vs 1) He came preaching, proclaiming. The Greek word (*khru<sup>s</sup>sw*, *kerusso*) means voicing in a very open, obvious, even official way—crying out loud for all to hear. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (vs 2) So cries out loudly this strangely dressed man. He wears a camel hair garment with a leather belt. His diet is honey dipped grasshoppers, not exactly, but something like it, locust and wild honey. The dress is purposeful. It's like the dress of Elijah in the OT. Malachi had prophesied, “Behold, I will send Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.” (Malachi 4:5) Certainly John turns some heads, but the plan and goal is to turn some hearts. Here in Matthew he is tied to the words of another

prophet, the voice of Isaiah, “the voice crying in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the LORD.” (vs 3) John was crying out loud for sure.

In that cry he said to expect a greater One. John some the he will not even be worthy to carry the sandals of this One (vs 11). John baptized with water, but this One, John says, will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. John cries out loud about judgment. He says it’s close at hand, the ax is all ready to drop on the roots. The unfruitful tree will be chopped down and tossed into the fire. He says the mightier One will take His winnowing fork in hand and clear the threshing floor. The wheat will be separated from the chaff. The chaff, like the unfruitful trees, will be thrown into the fire, and this fire is even described as “unquenchable.” (vs 12)

John speaks out about judgement. But he was also crying out loud about salvation (Luke 3:18). There was salvation for those who turned from sin to the promises. It was a wonderful thing that those multitudes from Jerusalem, Judea, and the region about the Jordan who confessed their sins and were baptized were looking to. They were not expecting to go up the kingdom of God, no, they were expecting the kingdom to come down. They were looking for the fulfillment of the prophets, like that from Isaiah 11 today.

They were looking for the Shoot from the root of Jesse. He would exercise right judgment. He would gather into His granary. What a granary it would be. It would be the place where the wolf dwells with the lion, the leopard with the young goat, the calf with the lion, the cow and

the bear, the place where the little child will not be harmed by the poisonous snakes. It will be on God's holy mountain where there will be no harming or destroying. (Isaiah 11:9) For crying out loud, quite amazing, don't you think?

So John cries out loud calling for repentance. He cries out loud for all to hear. He wants all hearts turned in the same way, the way of repentance. He knows it is either judgment or salvation. There is no middle road. He cries out to the Pharisees and Sadducees who come out to see what is going on, calls them a brood of vipers. He is calling them to repent. He calls Herod to repent, tell him it's not right for him to have the wife of his brother.

"For crying out loud, John, your crying out loud is too loud!" It was upsetting folks, folks you didn't want to upset, those with power. It upset Herod, even more so, Herodias, his brother's wife. Eventually Herod would lock John up. "Not so loud, you're hurting my ears! Won't a whisper do? For crying out loud put a sock in it already!"

John is put in prison, but God's cry is not silenced. The Mightier One comes. He comes to the water. He is baptized overcoming John's objections. As He comes up from the water, the Holy Spirit comes down as a dove and the Father cries out loud, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17) That baptism and cry marks the beginning of the public work of the Mightier One.

His words and works cry out. The works are like signs crying, "Look over here." People cry out words of marvel at those work as they are shut

your mouth amazing.” “What new teaching with authority! He commands the unclean spirits and they obey him!” (Mark 1:27) “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.” (Mark 7:37) “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and sea obey him? (Matthew 8:27)

Yes, His words cry out also. It wasn't a matter of volume, but authority. His words were convicting, words calling for repentance. And His words were words of life for all who believed. His were words of sins forgiven and even endearment, words like “son” (Mark 2:15), “daughter” (Matthew 9:22), and “little flock.” (Luke 12:32) His words were words of judgment for those who refused to believe, even words of woe (Matthew 23, woes on the scribes and Pharisees). His words were those who turned hostile words back on those who spoke them. His words were true. He said to Nicodemus, “We speak of what we know and bear witness to what we have seen.” (John 3:11) He came to speak and cry out as He had come to seek and to save the lost. He wants all to believe and have a place on God's Holy Mountain. But not everyone does.

Hardened hearts are not turned, but become more hardened. Those Pharisees and Sadducees conspire to stop Him, to take Him in hand, and finally, at last, they succeed. It looks like His crying out loud will be silenced. He is betrayed, tried, condemned, led away, crucified. There is a lot of crying out loud there at the cross. There are the cries of those who lament and wail at what is happening. There are those crying in mockery and they think victory. “He saved others, but He can't save Himself.”

“Let Him come down and we will believe in Him.” The air is filled with the cries. And from the Father on this day what do we hear? There is no reassuring, “You are still my son,” no, “this is an innocent man.” From the Father it is shout of silence, nary even a whisper!”

“It is finished,” is His cry from the cross, finished but not over, that is, his work, only really begun. Now it is entrusted to His followers. They will hear the words of their risen Lord on the third day after His death. He shows Himself alive and tells them they have some crying out loud to do. They have a two fold message to cry, one that calls to repentance from sin, and one that gives forgiveness of sins. It is to be preached, proclaimed, cried out loud to all nations beginning in Jerusalem. It is the shout of warning and the proclamation of promise. The apostles knew the danger of sin, but they had the answer. They knew the full rescue.

It is salvation or judgment. There is no in-between. Those who believe have life. They have passed already from death to life and will not see judgment. Those who do not believe are condemned. As they do not look to the Son’s bearing the judgment of sin for them, they will bear it themselves forever, and ever. This is the forever outside of the feast where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, the judgment of unquenchable fire.

We are still in those crying out loud days. Brothers and sisters in Christ we are brothers and sisters as we have been baptized into Christ. We have been cleansed, the Spirit poured out, put on Christ! Still temptation is always at hand. The cry goes out, “stop!” It comes from the law. It comes from our conscience. It comes from our brother and sister.

We are not always ready to hear it. “Stop crying out loud to stop!” But God still cries. We look to Christ confessing our sin and He cleanses. We continue to hear, to believe, and cry that more may know.

Yes, it is still crying out loud time. We cry not to be obnoxious. No we cry because we know the danger, the problem, the judgment, but we also know the Savior. We cry. There are still those to be brought to faith. Our cry is not necessarily, not often really, with a megaphone. Often the it is our deeds that lead to those being serve to voice the request for us to give voice for our reason. We then get to cry out loud about Jesus. We cry until our Lord calls us to Himself, or He comes down to bring His Holy Mountain. We cry to wake people from a sleep much more severe than snoozing in front of the TV. We cry out loud so they may know true rest. For Jesus’ sake. Amen