

Advent 2022
Have you ever heard John the Baptist preach?
Week 4 – John’s Legacy
Dave’s Reflections

2. “Did you ever hear John preach? If you haven’t, you will. Because the only way to Nazareth is through the desert. Well, that’s not really true. You can get to Nazareth without going through the desert. But you won’t find Jesus.” (Fred Craddock)

Today we come to take a look at John’s legacy.

All three gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke record the death of John at the hands of Herod. Herod, when he had heard about Jesus healing and raising people from the dead was “perplexed because some were saying John had been raised from the dead.” (Luke 9:7-8)

When Jesus asked his disciples “Who do the crowds say I am?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist.” (Luke 9:18-19)

When Paul came to Ephesus, he found some disciples and when he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed they replied that they did not know about the Holy Spirit. “What baptism did you receive?” he asked. “John’s” they replied.

In fact, there is evidence that there were disciples of John in the second century.

In our Anglican calendar memory is preserved in two Holy Days – June 24th marking his birth and August 29th which marks his death. The Eastern Orthodox Church has six days set aside in John’s memory.

He is honoured in the names of churches, our neighbouring parish of St. John in the Wilderness being just one of those churches.

He is honoured in other religions. For example, in the Quran he is described as an upright man.

He is the subject of numerous paintings.

In Canada he is honoured as the patron saint of the provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick as well as the cities of St. John's Newfoundland, St. John New Brunswick and St. Jean sur Richelieu in Quebec. June 24, which commemorates John's birth is also the Fete Nationale du Quebec.

Today, I would like you to look at the legacy of John the Baptist through the eyes of four people – St. John the Evangelist, St. Matthew, and St. Luke. Who is the fourth person – Fred Craddock of course.

For our purposes:

St. John is the author of the fourth gospel, an apostle and a former disciple of John the Baptist. He is baffled by the reluctance of the Jewish people to accept Jesus as the Son of God (aka the Word made flesh.) He is writing to bring every man and woman to belief in Christ.

St. Matthew is the tax collector who became a disciple of Jesus and the author of the first gospel. He is writing to Jewish Christians but he won't be upset if us Gentiles listen in.

St. Luke is the companion of Paul the Apostle, a physician, the church's first historian and the author of the third gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. He is writing to Gentiles, Theophilus in particular who is probably an official in the Roman government. He is writing to assure the Roman government that Christians pose no threat to the Roman Empire. He can be viewed as the first Christian apologist.

Two of our readings will be repeats while there will be one new reading.

3. Let us Pray:

Let not Thy Word, O Lord, become a judgement upon us, that we hear it and do it not, that we know it and love it not, that we believe it and obey it not: O Thou, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest, world without end. Amen (Thomas a Kempis)