

John the Baptist

Luke 1:57; 67–80

Today we celebrate the birth of John the Baptist, Jesus's cousin and the great forerunner of his ministry.

Enter into the Lord's presence with joy and gratitude.

Are you beginning to see patterns of sloth or pride in your life?

You are in Judea for John's birth. There were many miraculous signs leading to John's birth. We see a final one with Zechariah regaining his speech to give praise to God for his son's birth.

Pray that the Lord draws you out of sloth to embrace the kingly mission he has given you. Pray for the grace of freedom and humility for all Exodus Men, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love. Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke

Now the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered, and she gave birth to a son.... And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

Reflection

We see the fulfillment of God's covenant with David beginning through the birth of the forerunner John, who will manifest the coming Messiah. God made a promise to David that his throne would never cease, and yet, neither the Maccabean rulers nor Herod were of the line of David. It appeared that

David's line had become a barren stump. Zechariah recognizes in the birth of his own son a new beginning—a new shoot that fulfills the promises of God.

John means "God is gracious." The angel had named him when Zechariah received his vision in the Temple, showing that the time of God's grace and mercy had come. Zechariah had resisted the revelation of John's birth, and the bestowing of the name John now shows his obedience to God's plan. The birth of John is a great moment of grace for Israel and all people because it means that the appearance of the Savior is near.

It can be hard to see God's plan in our life, even when he gives us clear signs. The initial refusal of Zechariah and his ultimate acceptance are signs for us. If we abandon sloth and pride, we can be more attentive to God's will for our lives. We, too, have a role to play in pointing others to the Messiah.

We can learn much from John, who appears to embody the opposite of sloth. He enters the desert to take on the spiritual battle head on. He boldly preaches repentance even when it angers the powers that be. He rushes to meet the Messiah, pointing to him as the fulfillment of Israel's expectations. John did not back down from any challenge, because he knew he had a mission to pave the way for the coming of Christ.

Pray today that God will remove the obstacles in your life that make it hard to listen to his voice.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Week 4 Action Items

Plan a Midsummer's Eve Bonfire for Friday and invite men into your fraternity.

Recommit to your daily prayer.

Evaluate your technology use.