

The Rock: 01-02-2022

A year with the Master

First reading: Luke 2: 41-52

Title: The silence is broken

Scripture: Luke 3:1-6 (black bible Pg. 806)

Theme:

God is once again speaking. To a world in turmoil and doubt, the people of God get what they have longed for.

Introduction:

We start a new series this morning, this first Sunday of 2022. We are going to be spending "A year with the Master", going through the four gospels, stopping off at various points along the way in shorter series.

The Miracles, the parables and teachings, the encounters Jesus had with individuals, the healings which took place -all things to help us see what it means to be a follower of Jesus in our lives.

To discover what it looks like to be discipled and at the same time to grow together in this community of believers,

this congregation God has put together here at The Rock.

We will be taking the Easter season to look at the last night and day of Jesus in the "upper room" with His disciples.

After all, John devotes nearly one half of his gospel record to that last night and all Jesus told them. Something which should cause us to pause there for a time.

If it was that important for John to write down, it ought to be important enough for us to dig in to see why.

Christmas too, will be with John and his first chapter. But that is a year away, and there is a lot of journeying to do in the in-between times, before we get there.

The Story:

As we begin our journey, it's good, at least I think it is anyway, to explain a couple things. I never want to assume anything by way of how much we each know, or don't.

For some this will be very familiar territory, and for others it may be very new to you. But as a favorite theologian and pastor once said: "It is not my job to teach us something new and fancy. It

is my job to remind us all, myself included, of the things that we should never forget.

So, a question that is good to ask and try to answer, is: Why four gospels? Why not just one and be done with it? After-all when you look at them, they have repetition of stories, especially in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Sometimes the stories are exactly the same, and other times details don't always line up.

Then there is John and his gospel, where he seems like he's doing his own thing. He doesn't really focus on the same things as the other three.

Those one's, which we call the synoptic gospels. (The general summary) -present that long -view of Jesus's life, where John just seems to cut to the chase and hits some pertinent highlights.

That's actually why there are four, because they each tell Jesus's story with a particular people and purpose in mind. As well as from a personal perspective.

Second, it is good then to remember, that the Bible was written to a particular people. Each writer had an actual group in mind as they were led by the Spirit,

and we need to remember that we are not those people.

The Bible is here and was written FOR us, but it was not written TO us. But it was written to somebody. So, when we come to this or any text of Scripture as we journey here in 2022, let's try to keep that in mind -context and to whom it is being written.

I've said it before, quoting Matt Chandler, it can never mean for us, what it didn't mean for them. Good Biblical interpretation and understanding remembers that.

For example: We cannot read our events of the day into the text and their events of their day, and then think at any point that we were on the mind of the writer all the way back then, here in little Northwest VT, America. We weren't.

Now, that does not mean that anything the Bible gives us doesn't matter to us -in fact, it is just the opposite, and we will discover that even today, as we look to apply to our lives what we find on these pages.

Matthew for example, was written for a Jewish audience as he wrote about Jesus and the events of His life. "Thus was fulfilled", is seen a lot because he was

drawing from the Old Testament, knowing his audience would understand.

Mark, probably the first gospel written is really Peter's point of view. Why do I say that? Well, it is commonly accepted that Mark got all his information from the Apostle Peter. It is hard, to the point, and doesn't really beat around the bush.

John, well John was the last letter written and it is possible (although not verifiable) that he, in his 90's at that time, was the last surviving eye witnesses to the events which happened.

Being such, and given the fact that it had been so long since those events occurred, this group of people known as "The Church" whom he was writing to, we can probably relate to far better than any other.

They believed, just as we do, by faith and not sight. By the testimony of those who have gone before. They had never seen Jesus and probably had never gone to Israel.

Then, where we are today, here in Luke, let's remember what we learned on Christmas Eve, that Luke wanted facts, eye-witnesses as he was writing to a

particular person, not a church or a people.

But to a man named Theophilus. The recipient of this letter of "investigation", as well as the one Luke wrote which we call "Acts".

-Luke 1:1-4 (ESV)

"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught."

-Acts 1:1-3 (ESV)

"In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."

Luke wrote with purpose. So, it would make good sense then that Luke continues his story to Theo in this way. He has to let him, and us (as beneficiaries) know two times that Jesus grew up, was filled with wisdom and favor.

-Luke 2:40 (ESV)

"And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him."

-Luke 2:52 (ESV)

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."

This is the sum total of what we know about the in-between years of Jesus -They returned to Nazareth and Jesus grew in wisdom and favor.

Luke also discovers, from our first reading, that Mary and Joseph didn't exactly win the "parent of the year award", when they left Jesus behind in Jerusalem for a few days before they discovered he wasn't with them.

An encouraging reminder that even Mary and Joseph were human and prone to mistakes. We can know that Jesus was a carpenter, just like his dad.

There would be very little doubt of that, because that is how the culture worked. But even more telling here is the fact that there really is very little by way of information for these in-between years.

Jesus, working away in obscurity as a poor carpenter with his dad until he was about 30, is important for us to see.

Long-term faithfulness in one direction, dedicated to the tasks at hand, and not always day-dreaming of some distant horizon, until you are called elsewhere, is essential for success.

Jesus did not try to make anything happen along the way. He was schooled in God's providence, and waited for the right time, and was simply faithful to do what God had given Him to do until He was called elsewhere.

Too often we want things according to our calendar, don't we? Even those things we know are God's will for our lives, we will in our lack of patience, struggle with God's timing in our lives.

It ought to bring us great comfort that we are kept in Christ. To see in the Bible that reminder that we are on God's timeline of history, and there is nothing

in this universe outside of His care and concern.

Here we discover that Luke starts here in chapter three as he does with what is in essence a time-stamp along that line of history:

-Luke 3:1-2 (ESV)

"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness."

Try not to simply skip over these lists of names in your bible when you read. They are there with purpose and are very important to the entire story God has given to us. These men are not insignificant, nor are they innocent bystander in these events that are about to unfold.

Chuck Swindoll makes an interesting observation here:

"You cannot separate John the Baptizer from his times. And the time were bleak. Like most ancient chronicles, Luke's

account establishes the historical context of the narrative, starting with the most important rulers and working his way down the chain of command."

-Swindoll's living insights Pg. 93

The name that may be the most familiar to us is attached to the Easter story, and it is Pontius Pilate. What is helpful to know is that Roman records tell us that he became governor or procurator in 26AD.

So, there you have it, a date on the time line of history. Anywhere between 26-30 AD is a solid place for the events of Jesus life.

What is just as important for us as we begin this, "Year with the Master", is to see that though we are separated by time and place -not much has changed.

"It's all the same, only the names will change, everyday..."

Swindoll continues:

"So, we might be tempted to skim over verses like this, but only to our own detriment. Luke includes this information because it tells us something about the man John.

John began his ministry during a time of political fracturing in Israel. While priests and procurators vied for power,

the people desperately longed for a leader."

-Swindoll's living insights Pg. 93

Here we are, the second day of the year 2022, with the benefit of history, recognizing that even today we find that the Bible matters. It is relevant, and it has much more to say about our predicament that we would care to admit.

If we did admit that this ancient book, the Bible speaks today, just as it did then, we would have to be prepared to say: "I am part of the problem, and only with Jesus can I become part of the solution."

It is why we need Jesus, because we cannot fix ourselves from within all by ourselves. If the world is showing us anything, it is that!

For as men and women today fight for and vie for power, the church has a great opportunity to be a "John the Baptizer" as it were, in our own time.

In order to do that, we have to look different and act different than the world! We have to fight differently than the world does. Otherwise, the world will not be attracted to this beautiful story of Jesus and salvation.

Then we will bring hope where there seems to be none:

-Luke 3:3-6 (ESV)

"And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

Mission -Message!

Tell the world -be a voice of one crying in the wilderness! But don't just tell them anything they want to hear. No, tell them what they need to hear, what we all need to hear.

That God has broken into the world, into our time in and through this carpenter from Nazareth, named Jesus. Tell them we are all in need of a savior, and He is the one whom God promised.

No, he will not, nor does he even today fit the idea that the world would want

for a king and leader, but He is the one God promised, the one the world needs.

And John, John the cousin of Jesus will be the one whom Isaiah wrote about. Setting the stage, preparing the people for their coming King.

The town crier. The Herald, bringing the good news, the Sargent at arms hollering in the halls of power: Ladies and Gentlemen: The King has arrived.

This is what John is doing here. In troubled and trying times, when the people of Israel were looking for their King, John says:

"The time is now! The silence is broken. Repent, make straight your paths and come to God, for all flesh will see His salvation. Now is the time, today is the day."

How we need this today! God has given to us this Jesus, and He is for everyone who seeks Him and receives him.

The Bible says that he will receive all those who come to Him, and will make them His own. The challenge for us all as we begin 2022, is to look ahead, to grow forward, to be changed and conformed to this Jesus.

It is a new year, reflect back only to grow forward. Being conformed to the likeness of Jesus demands that we live each year as a new year.

Not as the same old year we keep living year after year, never experiencing growth, spiritual development and discipleship.

So many folks live the same year of their lives over and over, never realizing that the same problems arise over and over because we aren't learning to grow forward.

But, if our King has come, and He has, then we need to realize that the only thing that will hinder our growing in Christ, is our choice to stay as we are.

But the voice of one calling and crying in the wilderness is calling you and me back home.

Communion and prayer