

Sermon Notes: December 8, 2024

Focus: John the Baptist

[Lectionary](#)

Liturgical preachers around the world get on the same Advent track every year. We have the second coming at the beginning. John the Baptist gets middle of Advent. Mary finishes the rotation. *Detail note:* There are three years in our lectionary. Each liturgical year (A, B or C) starts on the first Sunday of Advent. This year, we are two weeks into year C, and John the Baptist is front and center.

Advent and John the Baptist vis-à-vis Luke In the gospel today, Luke wants you to know that Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, is the prodromos or forerunner (πρόδρομος) to Jesus the Messiah.

The different Gospel writers take different tones. Mark sees the preparation and fulfilment of the promise in the pair. Matthew is like Mark, but really sees Jesus as the new Moses with John as the usher. **Luke** takes both themes of fulfillment and the New Moses. He relishes stories of Angels and dreams circling around Mary, Joseph, Zechariah, Elizabeth and the holy children they will raise.

In all the Gospels, John the Baptist insists that justice prepares the way of Jesus. We have unearned privilege; we are tempted to give powerful people a pass; we have compromised our ethics, at least once. How do we repent of this for the sake of justice? Let contentment replace fear; Let your money be enough; Be satisfied with your lot.

John's ethic was rooted in expectation as well as 'demotion'. Jesus is the one who is more powerful than John (expectation). Jesus is also coming after John. John says, "I am not worthy to carry his sandals." (demotion) Jesus is in charge. We can seek God's will and trust God's transformation of other people, even if it means we don't get all or any of the credit.

Note about the sermon itself: I want to talk about the long list of leaders and rulers that Luke describes in Chapter 3, but I will leave that exploration for the sermon.

Next, I want to spend time on one word: (πρόδρομος) If you don't care about word study, skip to the bottom.

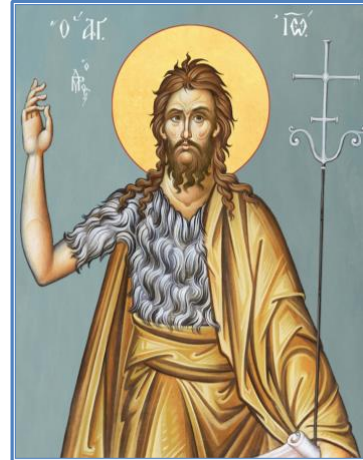
Prodromos forerunner The word prodromos (πρόδρομος) comes from ancient Greek and has layers of etymology. John as forerunner is not something just made up for the Bible.

Breakdown of the Word:

- “Pro” (προ-) means “before” or “in front of.”
- “Dromos” (δρόμος) means “course,” “race,” or “path.”

So together - “one who runs ahead” or “forerunner.”

Military Prodromos In ancient Greek, prodromos was often used in a military context to describe scouts or vanguard troops. These individuals or units went ahead of the main army to reconnoiter the terrain, identify obstacles, or secure the path for the advancing forces.



Athletics Prodromos The word “dromos” connects to athletic competition arenas in ancient Greece, and the prodromos was a pacesetter.

From the online etymology dictionary “drome” specifically can have a lot of modifiers.

hippodrome (n.) "horse racecourse," 1580s, from French hippodrome, from Latin hippodromos "racecourse," from Greek hippodromos "chariot road, racecourse for chariots." In modern use, "circus performance place" (mid-19c.), and thus extended to "large theater for stage shows."



I kept connecting this to the Olympics and those bike racers with enormous leg muscles racing bikes in the “velodrome.”

Crops and Stars Prodromos Prodromos could describe early signs or harbingers. In astronomy, it referred to stars or that “precede” others like the first star you see at night. In agriculture, it referred to early ripening fruits, signaling the harvest.

To get back on point, what does God require: for us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God? *Micah 6:8.*

To get folksy, I want to quote the diocesan youth coordinator who was the “prodromos” for diocesan convention (twenty years ago ahead of a challenging session in Texas). He probably was channeling John the Baptist when he said: “Love God, Serve People, Don’t be a Jerk,” and immediately exited stage left.

Happy Second Week of Advent.

Todd