

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

“THE FAITHFUL WITNESS TO JESUS”

For individual study or group discussion

Every follower of Jesus is called, in some measure, to be a witness; but faithful witness requires clarity, humility, and courage. In John 1:19–28, we meet John the Baptist under careful scrutiny from religious leaders who want to know exactly who he claims to be. His responses reveal a model for Christian testimony that is as relevant today as it was then: he knows who he is not, he understands who he is, and he consistently points beyond himself to Christ. This passage invites us to examine our own **faithful witness to Jesus** as we consider what it means to prepare the way of the Lord during Advent.

Faithful witnesses to Jesus clearly answer their questioners. (vv. 19–21)

John’s testimony begins under investigation. Religious leaders want clear categories: Who are you? John responds with remarkable honesty and restraint. He offers three firm denials: he is not the Messiah, not Elijah, not the Prophet. John’s clarity protects the Gospel and his identity from confusion, as well as protects himself from pride. Faithful witnesses do not exaggerate their role; they speak truthfully about who they are and who they are not (cf. John 1:8, 20).

- Read 1 Timothy 2:5. In what ways are Christians today tempted to take on identities or expectations that belong only to Christ? How does remembering that we are witnesses to Jesus shape our ministry and relationships?
- Read Malachi 4:5 and Matthew 11:13–14. Jesus identified the Baptist as Elijah. How does v. 21 highlight John the Baptist’s humility?

Faithful witnesses to Jesus humbly clarify their identities. (vv. 22–23)

The Baptist’s three “*I am nots*” make room for his true “*I am*.” Pressed further, John defines himself not by title but by calling: “*I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness*” (cf. Isaiah 40:3). As Theologian F. Dale Bruner points out, the Baptist is not the Word (John 1:1), but a *voice* pointing to the Word—“*This is no mean office.*”¹ Preparing the way of the Lord means calling God’s people to repentance and readiness. John’s humility does not diminish his importance; it clarifies it.

- Read Isaiah 40:3. John describes himself as “*a voice*” rather than “*the Word*.” What does this clarification teach us about humility and our purpose in Christian service? (cf. John 3:30; 2 Corinthians 4:5)

Faithful witnesses to Jesus boldly point others to Jesus. (vv. 24–28)

The interrogation intensifies when the Pharisees question his authority to baptize. John answers boldly by shifting attention to Jesus: “*Among you stands one you do not know*” (v. 26). Even more striking is his confession of unworthiness; he is not fit to untie the Messiah’s sandals. John understands that authentic ministry magnifies Christ. As the Gospel subtly suggests, Jesus often stands unrecognized in the very center of religious gatherings, calling for eyes of faith to see him. We are invited, like John, to examine our own “*I am nots*” and “*I ams*.” When we embrace our limits and our calling, we too become faithful witnesses, clear in confession, humble in identity, bold in pointing others to Jesus, and grounded in “*Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*” (Matthew 6:10).

- John says, “*Among you stands one you do not know.*” How is it possible to be religiously active and still miss Jesus? (cf. Matthew 15:8)
- What does John’s confession of unworthiness reveal about his view of Jesus, and how should that shape the way we speak about Christ to others?

DATE: December 28, 2025

SPEAKER: Chad/Frank

SERIES: Advent 2025

PASSAGE: John 1:19–28

Family Dinner Table

The Signpost, Not the Destination

In C. S. Lewis’ *The Silver Chair*, the children are given a set of clear signs to follow in order to rescue Prince Rilian. The signs are not the goal; they exist only to point beyond themselves. Trouble begins when the travelers stop trusting the signs and start relying on their own judgment. When the signs are ignored, they lose their way. John the Baptist is like one of those signs. When questioned, he refuses to draw attention to himself. He clearly says who he is not and then defines himself simply as “*a voice*.” A signpost does not ask travelers to admire it; it points them in the right direction and stays put. John understands that his purpose is not to be noticed, but to prepare the way for Christ, even when Christ is standing among the crowd of people, unrecognized.

Faithful witness works the same way today. We are not the destination; Jesus is. Our calling is to be clear, humble, and bold: pointing beyond ourselves to him. When people encounter Christ through our witness, the sign has done its job.

- The travelers in *The Silver Chair* get into trouble when they stop trusting the signs. Read 2 Corinthians 5:6–9. What does Paul teach us about faithfulness in witness, especially when pointing to Christ feels costly, unnoticed, or misunderstood? (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:2)

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¹ Bruner, Frederick Dale. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. 2012, Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans. 67