

November 30, 2003  
A.M. Service – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent  
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“The Holy Spirit and John the Baptist: Power to Persuade”  
Luke 1:8-17 NLT

8 One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week. 9 As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary and burn incense in the Lord's presence. 10 While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying.

11 Zechariah was in the sanctuary when an angel of the Lord appeared, standing to the right of the incense altar. 12 Zechariah was overwhelmed with fear. 13 But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! For God has heard your prayer, and your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son! And you are to name him John. 14 You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice with you at his birth, 15 for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or hard liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. 16 And he will persuade many Israelites to turn to the Lord their God. 17 He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah, the prophet of old. He will precede the coming of the Lord, preparing the people for his arrival. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will change disobedient minds to accept godly wisdom."

### **The Holy Spirit and the Birth of Christ**

Have you ever noticed how much the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the events surrounding the Birth of Christ? John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit even before his birth (which is one reason why Christians believe that life begins at conception and not only at birth.). (Luke 1:35) The angel told Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Upon Mary's visit (Luke 1:41) Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and the baby she was carrying leaped for joy in her womb when Mary greeted her. (Luke 1:67) Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied about the Salvation that was about to come. (Luke 2:25) Simeon was filled with and led by the Holy Spirit who revealed to him that He would see the Messiah before he died. The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon as he held Jesus in his arms and praised God for keeping His promise, thus recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. [By the way, MSNBC reported ten days ago that Archaeologist recently found a 60 foot high monument in the Kidron Valley, to the east of Jerusalem's walled Old City and west of the Mount of Olives. The inscription carved into the monument says the monument is the tomb of "Simeon who was a very just man and a very devoted old (person) and waiting for the consolation of the people." This passage carved on the monument is identical to the Gospel verse Luke 2:25]. Several people were filled with the Holy Spirit and were used in bringing about the most incredible news ever to be heard on earth - News so great that angels from heaven itself came to proclaim it. God became a human baby and dwelled among His creation.

We don't think much of the Holy Spirit's part in the first Coming of Christ. But the infant in Mary was put there by the energy of the Holy Spirit. Therefore Jesus would be holy, pure, not corrupted by sin and therefore, the perfect and pure sacrifice for the sins of the world. Because God loves you so much He would rather die than live without you. It is hard to understand how the Almighty God, the Creator would want to be in an intimate relationship with us. It is easier to understand the relationship of God as Master and we as servants; it is easier to understand the relationship of God as Creator and we as his creation; but it is hard to understand that God would want to be our close intimate friend. Jesus came to die for you. To pay the price for our sins so we could be free to know a holy God intimately. It is what is known as grace.

### **John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit and the Birth of Christ**

Today I want to talk about John the baptizer. The name John means, "God is gracious." The Bible says that he was filled with the Holy Spirit even before he was born. While he was still in his mother's womb he jumped for joy when Mary, pregnant with the baby that would be the Savior of the world, greeted John's mother, Elizabeth. The Holy Spirit filled John and gave *John Power to persuade many to turn to the Lord their God* (v16). He was not Elijah but *came in the spirit and power of Elijah* (v17a). John's birth preceded the birth of the Lord and he *prepared the people for the Lord's arrival* (v17b - He ushered in the Messianic Age).

It also says (v17) that he turned the hearts of the fathers to their children (i.e. his message helped put families back together), and he changed disobedient minds to accept godly wisdom (instead of following the wisdom of the world he taught people to obey God i.e. to have godly wisdom).

*John taught repentance, a turning away from sin and turning back to God, as the way of preparing for the coming of the Messiah.*

*The Holy Spirit gave John (and will do the same for us):*

*Power to persuade*

He persuaded people to confess or admit their sins and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.

*The power of a prophet*

John the Baptist's role was almost identical to the OT prophets: to turn the people's hearts back to the Lord.

*Power to prepare people.*

By persuading people to turn from sin to God he was preparing them to receive the coming Messiah. For the coming of Jesus was for the redemption of man.

### **The Birth (Advent) of Christ**

The Holy Spirit gives power to persuade people to admit their sin, turn their hearts back to the Lord and receive Jesus. We would all admit that we have done things wrong. We

have made some of those things a habit and have become a slave to sin. And we all have selfish hearts. Jesus brings freedom/redemption. He frees us from the habit of sinning, He frees us from a selfish heart, He frees us from addictions and fears, He frees us to love and obey God. Jesus came because we, His creation was in need of redemption. We have been overcome with sin, we have lived independent of God and instead of freedom we are people without hope and meaning.

A.J. Gordon was the great Baptist pastor of the Clarendon Church in Boston, Massachusetts. One day he met a young boy in front of the sanctuary carrying a rusty cage in which several birds fluttered nervously. Gordon inquired, "Son, where did you get those birds?" The boy replied, "I trapped them out in the field." "What are you going to do with them?" "I'm going to play with them, and then I guess I'll just feed them to an old cat we have at home." When Gordon offered to buy them, the lad exclaimed, "Mister, you don't want them, they're just little old wild birds and can't sing very well." Gordon replied, "I'll give you \$2 for the cage and the birds." "Okay, it's a deal, but you're making a bad bargain." The exchange was made and the boy went away whistling, happy with his shiny coins. Gordon walked around to the back of the church property, opened the door of the small wire coop, and let the struggling creatures soar into the blue. The next Sunday he took the empty cage into the pulpit and used it to illustrate his sermon about Christ's coming to seek and to save the lost -- paying for them with His own precious blood. "That boy told me the birds were not songsters," said Gordon, "but when I released them and they winged their way heavenward, it seemed to me they were singing, 'Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed!'"

The Holy Spirit wants to persuade you and/or use you to persuade others to admit your need, confess your sin, turn to God and find freedom and redemption by receiving Jesus. Jesus came to die to forgive our sin (he was the perfect and pure sacrifice. Our sins were laid on Him who was without sin so that in turn He could cover us with His righteousness).

John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. Baptism was such an essential part of his work that he was described as "John the Baptist." Baptism was a public and physical way of declaring that a person was turning over a new leaf. The Messiah was coming. He is holy and so preparation to receive Him meant turning from sin, being forgiven and being made holy.

### **The Second Advent (Coming) of Christ**

In the spirit of John the Baptist we declare today that Jesus is coming again. (Acts 1:9-11) When Jesus was taken up to heaven His followers were told, "Jesus has been taken away from you into heaven. And someday, just as you saw him go, he will return!" We must be prepared / ready for His return. John taught that while repentance or turning to God is done in a moment the practice or the living out of that commitment to God is on going process. Those who have repented must show signs or fruit of that repentance. Baptism is a symbol of ones surrender to God. Offering ourselves to live to please God is a

natural response to God's amazing love and mercy shown to us in that He sent His only Son, Jesus to die for us. God loves you, that is why Jesus was born and that is why He died...for you. He loves you more than you can imagine. If you were the only person on earth He would care for you and would die for you. Rom 12:1 NLT - "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice--the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?"

Who started Christmas?

This morning I heard a story on the radio of a woman who was out Christmas shopping with her two children. After many hours of looking at row after row of toys and everything else imaginable. And after hours of hearing both her children asking for everything they saw on those many shelves, she finally made it to the elevator with her two kids.

She was feeling what so many of us feel during the holiday season time of the year. Overwhelming pressure to go to every party, every housewarming, taste all the holiday food and treats, getting that perfect gift for every single person on our shopping list, making sure we don't forget anyone on our card list, and the pressure of making sure we respond to everyone who sent us a card.

Finally the elevator doors opened and there was already a crowd in the car. She pushed her way into the car and dragged her two kids in with her and all the bags of stuff. When the doors closed she couldn't take it anymore and stated, "Whoever started this whole Christmas thing should be found, strung up and shot."

From the back of the car everyone heard a quiet calm voice respond, "Don't worry we already crucified him." For the rest of the trip down the elevator it was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop.

Don't forget this year to keep the One who started this whole Christmas thing in your every thought, deed, purchase, and word. If we all did it, just think of how different this whole world would be.

Offering yourself to God is not *a* way to live it is the only way to live.

Jesus made direct access and friendship with God available to us once again (for it had been lost in the Garden of Eden). John the Baptist, filled with the Holy Spirit preached about it: May the Holy Spirit persuade you to admit and turn from sin, to turn to God by receiving Jesus, may He give you power to live for Jesus moment by moment and may Jesus find faithful obedience in you when He comes again.