

25 Days of Advent

Seeing Jesus Through the Eyes of the Christmas Story Characters

ADVENT DAY 21: Dec. 21 – John, a Voice Crying in the Wilderness

Devotional

Why include John the Baptist in the characters of Christmas? Think back to the beginning of the Christmas story in Luke – it starts with the birth of John the Baptist. The two were cousins. No doubt they spent a lot of time together growing up; their mothers were close after all. And the two are intricately tied to Jesus' ministry on earth. John would, ultimately, prepare the way for Christ, calling people to repentance and baptism. You can't have one without the other.

Apart from Jesus Christ, John the Baptist is probably the most theologically significant figure in the Gospels. Their lives were divinely similar:

- John's birth was miraculous. He was born of elderly parents who had never been able to have children (Luke 1:7). Jesus' birth was miraculous, he was born of a virgin who had never been with a man.
- The angel Gabriel announced to Zechariah, a Levitical priest, that he would have a son. Gabriel announced to Mary that she would have a son.
- When Gabriel told Mary that she would give birth to Jesus, he also told her about John.
- When Mary was carrying Jesus in her womb, she visited Elizabeth, and John leapt in his mother's womb for joy at the sound of Mary's voice (Luke 1:39-45). This incident shows that even though they are not yet born, John acknowledges the superiority of Jesus and recognizes that Jesus is God's son.
- John's coming was foretold over 700 years previously by another prophet: "A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.'" (Isaiah 40:3-5). Jesus' birth was also foretold by Isaiah, among other prophets (Isaiah 7:14, 9:6).

John's adult life was characterized by devotion and surrender to Jesus Christ and His kingdom. John's voice was a "lone voice in the wilderness" (John 1:23) as he proclaimed the coming of the Messiah to a people who desperately needed a Savior. He was the precursor for the modern-day evangelist as he unashamedly shared the good news of Jesus Christ. He was a man filled with faith and a role model to those of us who wish to share our faith with others.

His message and ministry marked the culmination of the law and the prophets, but heralded the breaking in of the kingdom of God (Matt 11:12 ; Luke 16:16). So John was truly a transitional figure, forming the link between the Old and New Testaments. He spans the ages with one foot firmly planted in the Old Testament and the other squarely placed in the New.

Makes you wonder if these two, as they were growing up, ever had discussions about what they would be when they grew up – and what they would mean to each other and ultimately, the world. "John, what do you want to do today?" I imagine Jesus asking. "Anything you want, cousin, you're more important than me. But what do you say we go catch some fish or chase down some bugs?"

Next time your kids are interacting with cousins or other close relatives, think about Jesus and John and how you might be raising the next generation of evangelists who will change the world.

Look Up – Connect with God

Read: Luke 1:57-80

Key Verse: “And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,” (Luke 1:76)

“And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.” (Luke 1:80)

Pray: Lord, help us to follow John’s example of faithful and obedient trust in God as we live and proclaim His truth in whatever life circumstances you give us.

Look In – Family Memories

Discuss: Do your children have close relationships with cousins or other family members? Talk about their friendships and what it means to nourish those relationships and carry them through to adulthood.

Activity:

- Advent Tree: select a twig or other “nature” ornament, or leather belt and put it on the tree. [Download Ornaments](#) or [Ornament Ideas](#)
- Advent Garland: put the key verse on a paper/card, assign #21, and attach it to the garland twine. [Key Verses](#)
- Advent Cards: select a card and see what the activity might be (i.e., make a card for someone special). [Family Activities](#)

Look Out – Connect with Others

Reach out to a ministry in your community that serves children like Big Brother/Big Sister. Ask if there is anything you can do as a family that would bless their ministry.