

John 1:6-8, 19-28

I've discovered something that you have probably known for quite some time already. You can find a lot of things through Google Search. This week I typed in the word "**voice**," and found more information than I would **ever** be able to use about the human voice. Most of the time we tend to think of the voice simply as **sound**. And it's **true**, the human voice **does** consist of **sound** made by a human being - using the vocal cords for things like **talking, singing, laughing, crying**, and even **screaming**. But it's a lot more complicated than that. Generally speaking, there are 3 parts to a voice - the lungs, the vocal cords, and the articulators. The **lungs** need to produce an adequate airflow to **vibrate** the vocal cords. So, they provide the **fuel** for the voice. The vocal cords fine tune the **pitch** and **tone** of the voice. Men's voices are usually **lower** than women's, because their vocal cords are longer and wider. And finally, the articulators - including the tongue, palate, cheek, and lips - **filter** and **shape** the sound. This whole process is capable of producing highly **intricate** arrays of sound. The tone of a voice may be modulated to suggest **emotions** such as anger, surprise, or happiness. **Singers** use the human voice as an instrument for creating **music**. But of course from **our** point of view, the human **voice** is most importantly a remarkable **gift** from God - a gift to be used to bring **glory** and **honor** to our gracious Creator.

In our text for today, we hear about a very **special voice**. In the words which we have before us today, John the Baptist tells us, "**I Am The Voice**" - the voice sent from **God**, the voice which fulfills **prophecy**, and the voice which proclaims the **Savior**.

The first thing we should note in our text today are the first **words**, "*There came a man who was **sent from God**.*" These words are important because they show us that this man had not chosen this work for himself. He was chosen **by God**, and he was **sent** by God. Now, while that statement is true for **every** called worker in the Church, this was a **special** time in the history of the world - a time when God's prophets had been **silent** for 400 years - a time when there was a spiritual **vacuum** - a special **time** for God to fulfill a special **purpose**. And God had chosen **this man** in our text to be an important part of **fulfilling** that purpose.

In the verses just **preceding** our text, John introduces us to the **Word**. He tells us that the Word existed in the **beginning** with God - that the Word actually **was** God - that all things were **made** through Him - and that there was **life** and

light in Him. And then in the opening verses of our **text**, John introduces us to **another** man named **John** - the one we know as John the Baptist - and he very clearly tells us that John was **different** from the Word. John was **not** in existence from the very beginning, he was **not** God, all things were **not** made through him, and in him there was **not** life and light. **John's** purpose was to serve as a **witness** to the light.

It doesn't take too long to discover that many people were **confused** about John the Baptist. The first group we hear coming to question him was a group of **priests** and **Levites**. I suppose that shouldn't be too surprising, because John's father, **Zechariah**, was a **priest**. Perhaps they were wondering why John wasn't following in his father's footsteps. Or if he **was**, then why were his actions so **different** from what they would normally **expect** to see in a priest? Why was he out in the **wilderness** instead of in the **temple**? Why was he preaching **repentance** instead of offering **sacrifices**? Why was he wearing a camel's hair coat instead of **priestly robes**? And what was this **baptizing** thing all about? Inquiring minds wanted to know.

So, they came and **asked** him, and we're told, "*(John) did not **fail** to confess, but confessed **freely**, 'I am **not** the **Christ**.'*" It seems that this was the **assumption** which the priests and Levites had made - an assumption which John quickly laid to **rest**. But, at the very **least**, John's **words** and **actions** had marked him as someone who had been **sent** from **God**. The priests and Levites recognized John as an important **religious** figure in their midst. So they continued, "*Then who **are** you? Are you **Elijah**? Are you the **Prophet**?*" And again in both instances John answered, "*No.*" This was very **frustrating** for them. We're told that they needed an **answer** to take back to those who had **sent** them, and so far they hadn't made any headway toward obtaining that answer.

Finally, to give them the information they needed, John quoted a passage from the Prophet Isaiah. "***I Am The Voice** of one calling in the desert, 'Make **straight** the way for the **Lord**.'*" **Every** roadway needs **preparation**. The hills and valleys need to be evened out, the trees and houses need to be cleared, and a firm **base** needs to be laid. If the **obstacles** are not removed, the road will be both **crooked** and **dangerous**. By preaching his message of **repentance**, John was telling the people to prepare their **hearts**. His purpose was to make a clear, straight path in those hearts for the **Lord** - a path which had no **obstacles** to go around. The obstacles we encounter in people's **lives** are made up of **sin**. Sin **blocks** the

way for the Lord as He seeks to **enter** human hearts. So John preached, “**Repent**” - be **sorry** for your sins, and strive to follow **God’s plan** in the future! That message made the people **aware** of their sins, and the fact that those **sins** were really keeping them **away** from **God**. John the Baptist had fulfilled Isaiah’s **prophecy**, by preaching **repentance**, and clearing the **path** in the people’s hearts for our Savior to come.

That message of repentance is still important **today**. What was true as the people waited for Christ’s **first** coming, is also true **now**, as we await His **second** coming. The Lord is looking for **repentance** in our lives, and when we **do** repent, we are preparing a path for the Lord in **our** hearts **before** He returns in all His glory on Judgment Day.

But John’s message included much **more** than repentance. He was also a **pioneer** - a man who forged ahead into areas which had been virtually untouched by those who had come before him. John tells us, “*I baptize with water.*” The specific action of **baptizing** was previously unheard of, although the Lord had said through the Prophet Ezekiel, “*I will **sprinkle clean water** on you, and **you will be clean**; I will **cleanse you from all your impurities** and from all your **idols.**” That thought certainly fits with John’s purpose of **preparing** the **hearts** of the people to receive the Savior. Nevertheless, John was actually doing his baptizing **before** the time when Jesus Himself **commanded** baptism.*

So, in addition to fulfilling Isaiah’s **prophecy** (and perhaps Ezekiel’s too) , it was also important for John to fulfill his duties as a **voice**. It’s interesting that when the people came to John, they were mostly interested in getting information about **him** - while **John** was far more interested in giving them information about **Jesus**. He said, “*Among you stands one you do not know. **He** is the one who comes **after** me, the thongs of whose sandals I am **not worthy** to untie.*” John pointed the people **away** from **himself**, and **toward** the **Savior**. He didn’t even consider himself worthy of being the very least of the **servants** of Christ. That wasn’t **false modesty** on John’s part. John wasn’t trying to down-play his **own** talents and abilities. Rather, he was emphasizing how great **Jesus** is. Jesus is the long-awaited **Messiah** - the **Savior** of the world. And what the people didn’t even **realize**, was that Jesus was already **right there** in their midst.

As we have heard so many times in the last few weeks, Jesus is coming **soon**. His coming as the Babe of Bethlehem is less than two weeks away - and His

coming as the Lord of the universe and Judge of all people, well, we don't know exactly **when** that will happen. But Jesus has told us that it will be **soon**. And **The Voice - John the Baptist** - has told us that we will want to have our hearts **prepared**, as we **repent** of our sins and turn to **Jesus alone** for **forgiveness**. Be sure that you **listen** to **The Voice** - the voice sent from **God**, the voice which fulfills **prophecy**, and the voice which proclaims the **Savior**. Amen.