

Third Sunday of Advent, Gospel, Year B

NOT AGAIN. BUT, WAIT FOR IT ...WAIT FOR IT ... I AM SOON

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Third Sunday of Advent

Analysis by Mark Marius

6There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

19This is the testimony given by John when the Judeans sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20John confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." 21And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." 22Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23John said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

24Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" 26John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, 27the one who is coming after me; the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." 28This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

DIAGNOSIS: Life in Nots

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Not Seeing

John came to testify to the light. He was a real eye opener to a

very dim world. The priests and the Levites questioned what kind of authority they were seeing in John. But John was not anyone they could have anticipated. They were living in the dark, which makes it very difficult to see straight. When human eyes adapt to such low light, they become accustomed to it, which means they see and comprehend the world differently. Living solely by the law does the very same thing. It dampens our hope for a brighter future, and heightens our fear of death.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Not Believing
John uses scripture to explain the mission he has been called to by God. He is the voice of one crying out in the wilderness. But he is not who the Judeans were expecting, therefore he is met with skepticism. “Why are you baptizing if you are not the Messiah, not Elijah, not the prophet?” God is doing something new but they have a hard time giving up their old beliefs. We, too, can get hung up on what has happened in the past and miss out on where God is doing new things.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Not Knowing
Among you stands One whom you do not know. Not knowing the One in our midst leaves us in a deadly tangle. We miss out on life (v. 4)—not life as we know it, but the life we were created for. Darkness comes for all of us when we think we have everything already figured out, or that we know enough. That is when we shut our eyes to the light, close our ears to the Word, and stop anticipating the Truth.

PROGNOSIS: Life without Nots

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Knowing
The good news is that the One about whom John testifies knows us. He knows our darkness. He knows our crooked paths. He knows our tangled knots. He also knows our death. While John is not that One, Jesus is. And since Jesus is the One, the life he gives is always there for the giving. In the Gospel-writer’s

understanding, Jesus knows all this—even in his death and resurrection. Salvation comes to us through Jesus' perfect knowledge and trust of God. And in John 1:33 we hear that the One who knows all will share that knowledge with us through baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Believing
...so that all might believe through him. Believing doesn't happen without Christ. The Light becomes our catalyst for faith. We can now trust God's restorative plan for our world and let go of how we could not achieve that on our own through keeping the law. We embrace all who, like John the Baptist, anticipate the gospel, delivering the message of grace, love and forgiveness. Not only are repentant hearts receptive to the Holy Spirit, but they are a sign of our trust in God's forgiveness.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Seeing
Living in and with the Light corrects our eyesight so that we can see—not just who Jesus is, but also the sheep of his pasture. We are sent out, not to ask questions (v. 22), but to show people that the Light is what we have needed all along. Living lives based on God's grace, love and forgiveness ensures the Light reaches all the darkness of our world. So we, like John, point others to the light so that they too may see, believe, and know God's love for our world.