

# One Voice Matt 31ff TLC Advent Dec 8 2019

Just one voice, singing in the darkness  
All it takes is one voice  
Singing so they hear what's on your mind  
And when you look around you'll find

There's more than one voice  
Singing in the darkness  
Joining with your one voice  
Each and every note another octave  
Hands are joined and fears unlocked

If only, one voice, would start it on its own  
We need just one voice facing the unknown  
And then that one voice would never be alone  
It takes that one voice

It takes that one voice  
Just one voice, singing in the darkness  
All it takes is one voice  
Shout it out and let it ring  
Just one voice, it takes that one voice  
And everyone will sing

One voice—if there was a modern song to describe John the Baptist in our Gospel lesson it would be the one by Barry Manilow. For John the Baptist is a voice in the darkness who is proclaiming to the people Repent.

***3 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup> "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>3</sup> For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,***

***"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:  
'Prepare<sup>[b]</sup> the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight.'"***

**Consider today the darkness in the wilderness, the  
darkness in Jerusalem, and the darkness ignited.**

**First darkness in the wilderness.** If you ever visit death valley which is one of our national parks there are regulations on the type of light a person can use at night. The reason why the national park has a light ban is so that people can observe the stars in the sky. However, when there are no stars and the sky is clouded over at night—the darkness is suffocating.

The darkness in states like a Alaska is challenging for many people. The sun just does not shine in some places for up to 67 days, but there are other places in Alaska that are not totally dark even in winter there is some sunlight. Never-the-less John the Baptist lived in a wilderness where it was very dark at a time with no flashlights and probably only a fire at night for any type of light. He was truly out in the outskirts of society. And to the best of our knowledge his parents Zechariah and Elizabeth were already in heaven with God—so John is like a rugged American Frontiersmen. He is not afraid of the elements. He has no concerns about paying bills or shopping for food. He is totally dependent upon God for everything like the prophet Elijah. There is no fear of the wild mountain lions or bears or dogs. There is no doubt in his mind about his calling to serve God.

Why would God want someone like this to prepare His way? Because this is the image of prophets like Elijah and Elisha in the past. Men who had little concern over power, wealth, or family. Men who were totally committed to God so that they would only point to the one who could save souls—Jesus.

None of us would be a person who could live off the land like John the Baptist did nor would we shop for a coat of camels hair at the local target, kohls, or macy's.

Camel hair is water resistant to protect you from the rain. Camel hair is not as itchy as other wool. Camel hair is light weight and warm to protect your from the cold nights. However it can also protect from the hot days—so it is still used by herdsman today, but it is hard to come by. LL Bean doesn't sell it and let's put it this way—if you buy a camel hair coat today it will cost over 2,000 and look nothing like the rugged outer wear John wore some 2,000 years ago.

He would have been easy to find—look for a man wearing camel wear near the river Jordon. And he likes to eat wild locusts and honey—no regular daily bread that the rest of us eat, no fish in his diet, no wine or olive oil—just the purest honey made by God.

### **Second consider the darkness in Jerusalem and Judea**

***<sup>5</sup>Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, <sup>6</sup>and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.***

The people you would think would have been satisfied with their sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple. Sacrifices were offered there in the morning and evening. There were hours of prayer in the middle of the day. There were teachers in every corner in the outer courts of Jerusalem.

And if that was not enough you would think people in parts of the country of Judea would have been spiritually filled by attending the local synagogue. They had morning prayer. They had the scriptures read and taught there.

The point is there were plenty of opportunities for the Israelite people to reflect, pray, sing, and worship God in both the temple and the synagogue—but they went to see John the Baptist.

The people were hungry to hear God's word. They were searching for more than what their local leaders were offering them. They knew no prophet had been among them for over 400 years since Malachi wrote his book.

Some of the people felt the priests in the temple were corrupt like the Sadducees since they did not believe in angels, miracles, the resurrection, and the prophets of the Old Testament.

Groups like the Essenes broke off from the rest of society because of sins and wanted nothing to do with the High Priest who worked with the Roman government to keep the peace.

Whatever the case may be—corruption or frustration by the people searching for the Messiah—what we can say they were searching for guidance from God.

And what we can be praying about is that people in our country today would look for God. That they would be seeking out the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—not by seeking a man in camel hair standing by a running river or any type of human teacher to honor him, but would be seeking a way to get out of the wickedness in their lives—the addictions, the immorality, and seek out God in the words of Scripture.

We have much more than the Israelite church of the past and even the early Christians—we have the full revelation of God in the Scriptures and His sacraments in the Lord's Supper and Holy Baptism.

**Out of the dark wilderness one voice calls for repentance, out of the dark leadership in Jerusalem people seek the truth, and out of the darkness a fire is ignited.**

<sup>7</sup>But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup>Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. <sup>9</sup>And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell

you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. <sup>10</sup>Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

**<sup>11</sup>"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup>His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."**

Fire—Ready, Aim, Fire and the gun goes off to start the race. Some may wonder why Jesus did not consume the leadership of the Pharisees and Sadducees immediately after John says this.

But they would be threshed out as more people left and became Christian in both the Hebrew world and Gentile world. And who can say they are part of the party of the Pharisees or Sadducees today? They are all gone.

What still happens is that this Holy Spirit of God still is calling and reaching out to Hebrew people in this world and Gentile people on this planet. The winnowing fork separates unbelief from belief.

And this started out from God calling one voice crying out in the desert repent.

You and I are you united with that one voice. We are still singing in the darkness—repent—meaning world change, by opening your eyes and seeing Jesus the light of the world who died on a cross so that all who believe in Him have eternal life. And there is no more just one voice, but voices of the Christian church throughout all the years and think that is more than just the 400 years between the Old Testament and the New Testament. It takes just one voice. Amen.