



**January 20, 2008**

Preaching: Rev. Eunbae Doh

John 1:19-28

## “I Am Not the Christ”

John the Baptist, the only man who baptized God, who was he? Here is a short biography of John the Baptist. He was a cousin of Jesus, the son of a priest in Judea, Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. While Elizabeth was pregnant with John, she met Mary, who was pregnant with Jesus, and John leapt within her womb.

John and Jesus have many things in common, their birth, ministry, message, even death. We know that Jesus was conceived by Holy Spirit. But we have a tendency to neglect the miraculous birth of John the Baptist. His mother Elizabeth was barren and too old to have a baby. It was a miracle also.

So, now we learn that we need to be born in some special ways to be something great. How were you born? Do you have any unique story of your birth or your children's birth?

Well, I don't have any memory of my birth because I was too young. But I have some memory of my children's birth. When my wife was delivering Daniel, I was there at the hospital to help her. She was almost losing consciousness and screaming, yelling at me. I was stepping up to her and holding her in my arm saying, "Honey you gonna be OK". But that was a big mistake. She grabbed my hair and began to shake my head all directions. I was so lucky to not lose my hair. So, I can tell you especially for men who are not married yet. Keep away from her!

Let me go back to the biography of John the Baptist.

When he grew up, John started preaching before Jesus. He was a wild figure, dressed in camel's hair and leather and eating locusts and wild honey. Hey, look at this guy; he had a great diet, low calorie, low sugar, low fat. God is good all the time.

He baptized his followers claiming that they needed to repent of their sins before God.

When Jesus turned up to be baptized by John, John at first refused to do it, saying, "I ought to be baptized by you." John believed himself to be the warm-up act, preparing the way for the arrival of Jesus. "I am not good enough even to carry his sandals," he said.

What really got John in trouble was preaching against the king, Herod Antipas. He publicly attacked Herod for marrying his brother's wife Herodias. So Herod arrested him, and then Herodias got her daughter to dance before him and he agreed to have the Baptist's head cut off and presented to her on a plate.

This is a brief life story of the man John the Baptist.

When we try to know who he was, it might be helpful to look what the people, who lived in his days, said about him.

***"He was a good man who commanded the Jews to live virtuous lives, to treat one another rightly and honor God, and therefore to be baptized."***

**Josephus (1st-century Jewish historian)**

There were also people who were trying to know who he was in his days. The Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. John answered that I am not the Christ. He knew what they were asking, what they were expecting of him. They were looking for the Christ. They were waiting for the Messiah. "I am not the person whom you are looking for"

"I am not the Christ." This is very important message. Think about it. He had a great reputation. Large crowds came out to hear him where he was preaching in the desert. He had many followers and power. He was the man whom King Herod could not exercise his power over easily. If he wanted, he could say that Yes, I am the one you were looking for, the Christ, the super hero. It was a great opportunity to be a national hero.

Look at the culture in which we live. Everybody wants to be a hero. There are so many heroes and people who are dreaming to be a hero, American idol, movie stars, pop stars, and political stars. But it is true that it is not easy for normal people to get the chance to be a hero or big star.

John the Baptist got a chance, when people asked him, “Who are you?” it was a crucial moment in his life. He could be the hero or he could be a just one of the religious leaders. What did he choose? He refused to be a hero. Instead, he said, “I am not the Christ.”

It was not only a chance but also a crisis. It was a chance to get popularity, power, and authority. At the same time, it was a crisis to be cast away from God.

Saul, the first king of Israel, was a great man. He was the person God chose to be the first King of Israel. But he was abandoned by God. Why did God throw him away like an old shoe? There are many arguments about the reason. Maybe nobody knows the reason.

Let us take a look what happened to him.

According to the Old Testament, Samuel had told Saul to wait for him for seven days before attacking their enemy, the Philistines, but as Samuel did not arrive within the appointed time and the Israelites became restless, Saul started preparing for battle by offering sacrifices; When Samuel finally arrived, he criticized Saul for not waiting for him.

After the battle was over, Samuel instructed Saul to kill all the Amalekites. Saul went to war and won against the Amalekites, but only killed all the babies, women, children, poor quality livestock and men, leaving alive the king and best livestock. When Samuel found out that Saul had not killed them all, he became angry and rebuked him.

I can not make any clear statement of why he was abandoned. Here is the word of the Lord telling us why God cast away Saul.

### **1 Samuel 15: 10**

***Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel: I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instruction.***

It was a transition period between theocracy and monarchy. There might be confusion about the role and responsibility of King. Probably, God’s intention was

to keep the political system a theocracy. God didn't want Saul to be a real ruler of his people.

That was the tragedy. Saul was a great man. He was a great warrior. He loved his people. But he did not know who he was. He did not know what he was not supposed to do. That was the problem. He didn't know who he was, what God wanted him to be.

John the Baptist, he did not have power. He did not have money. But he knew who he was, what he was supposed to do. That is the big difference between Saul and John. It made a huge different result of their destiny.

In Luke 7:28, Jesus said, ***“No one ever born on this earth is greater than John.”***

What was it that John the Baptist knew about his identity? He said, “I am the voice in the desert”. He identified him as a voice of God, not a hero, not a super star, and not the Christ.

Knowing who I am in front of God has been my homework for a long time. I have battled with this question. From the deep in my heart, I have had a strong desire to be a something special, something important, and something great. Do you know why I came to this country 8 years ago? Seemingly, I came to this land to study. But frankly, I had a hidden agenda. I needed a PH.D degree to be a pastor of Mega church in Korea. Glorious comeback with PH. D degree! That was my real intention and dream. That's what I wanted. That's why I came to this country. That's who I was.

After I finished my masters' degree, I applied for a Doctoral degree and was accepted. In that summer, just two months before I started Doctoral study, I was notified that my school could not maintain the program due to financial difficulty. Therefore they made a decision that they would not have any new student. My admission was cancelled. I was shock and immensely disappointed.

God destroyed my plan. God drove me out in the desert like John the Baptist. God sent me a city to serve a small Korean congregation. It was a wilderness. I can't explain what happened there. I was struggling with many tough issues which I had never experienced in my life. I cried out to God, God, why did you send me here? This is not the place I wanted to be. You ruined my life.

Now, I believe that God sent me there to learn who I was. God was asking me the same question that the people asked John the Baptist, who are you?

Now, I know how to answer the question.

Yes Lord, I am your voice.

Like a voice which doesn't have any shapes and traces,  
Help me to serve you as your voice.

Brothers and sisters in Christ,  
God is asking you the same question, who are you?

If you can find your true identity in front of God, You will have the real joy and  
peace from the heaven.

Amen.