

Witness to the Light

Intro. There are many ways to send a message today: Snapchat, Instagram, text, email, Facebook, Face Time, Skype. Less often these days is hand-written mail and the telephone. It depends on the age of the messenger. Before those was telegraph, telegram and Morse Code. Going *way* back, talking face to face was most often used. As in get in your car or on your bike and *physically go see* the other person. Each successive method seems to distance us from one another. We are literally losing “touch.” Often we do not even know the identity of who is communicating with us.

I. John the Baptizer was “old school.” He came out of the desert and stood in the border between the wild place and civilization, the Jordan River. He had

the look of a prophet as well as the message of one. He said things were about to change and in a big way. This of course caught the attention of the authorities who wanted to know who this guy was. Before the emissaries could say anything, John said, “I know what you’re thinking. Let me be clear about something right away: I am *not* the Messiah” [M. McGlone, *NCR*]. That must have surprised them. That is just what the religious leaders were thinking: here is another one claiming to be the Messiah. The group tried the name of a famous prophet, Elijah. According to scripture, 2Kings 2:11, Elijah did not die; he was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot and it was believed he would return before the Messiah. John demurred. The next attempt to identify him was another great prophet, Moses. Nope again. They were getting frustrated. They said they were

only doing their job and would be in trouble if they went back without a name. John didn't give them one; he said he was a "voice." Since they didn't understand how that identified him, they questioned his credentials to be baptizing [M. McGlone, *The Word*, NCR, 12/17/17]. In the end they had no answer as to John's identity they could report back to the Pharisees.

Concl. It is good to have so many ways to send messages to one another. However, I wonder about the *quality* of a lot of our communication. Much of it seems banal, inconsequential and even silly. With so much messaging going on, it sometimes seems the important messages get lost or overlooked. If there isn't an interesting subject line, we quickly delete or pass on to the next. In our history God has spoken directly to people; to the man and woman in the

garden. To Moses out of a burning bush. To prophets like a sleeping Jeremiah in the temple. Even to a recalcitrant, reluctant Jonah. He has spoken through angel messengers to Zechariah, John the Baptizer's father, and others. God communicates with us in as many ways as there are methods. He's even been known to use our modern ways. Do we never think God communicates with us? God sends us messages every day. Last week I suggested we commit to looking for and seeing God's messengers of Christian Hope each day. This week I suggest we seek the messenger and then her or his message. Finding God's messenger is a good thing. Hearing the message is more important because the message tells us our identity. Like John we are the voice in the wilderness of today's world; what we say and do is who we are.

