



For all our guests, those watching online, and all our covenant members, welcome! Why are days like today so important? Because we stand in the tradition of the Lord's community who have gathered regularly to worship for thousands of years. From the very beginning, Jesus followers [Acts 2:42](#)

[They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.](#) Next week we will break bread together for an amazing Creative Christmas including [baptism](#), communion, and songs led by our choir and redemptive arts team. If you have not yet been baptized as a declaration of your faith, check the bubble on the connect card and we would love to have a gospel conversation with you.

For the next several weeks we will look at the [Merry and Bright](#) nature of the Christmas story: celebrating the gift of salvation. Specifically, we gaze today at the light of Jesus, the Lamb of the world, and the impact of Messiah upon the John the Baptist.

["Born for This" \(Luke 1:39-42 and John 1:21-34\) pg # 908](#)

This morning we meet an infant in the Christmas story not named Jesus, in this passage the child simply named [the baby](#). You might be surprised to know that Jesus is not the only birth announcement found in the Gospels. Mary, upon finding that she was with child, hurried to her relative Elizabeth, who was also with child and his name was [John the Baptist](#) or the baptizer. Much like Jesus, the birth of John was unexpected. So much so, John's father Zechariah did not believe the angel Gabriel when he announced the birth, and was struck silent for months as a consequence.

[Born to Believe \(Luke 1:39\)](#) It was to Elizabeth's house, an unlikely pregnancy, that Mary **hurried** to tell the news of her unlikely pregnancy of the Messiah. The journey was about a **three or four day** adventure and when she arrived, she greeted them. The initial meeting is described in most simple terms, but it's highly possible that Mary's greeting including **more than a simple hello**.

Don't you think that Mary spoke about the special servant, Jesus, she was carrying. Isn't it possible she shared about being a virgin, and finding favor with the Lord, and that God himself **named** Him, and that this child will one day reign over the house of Jacob? All we know is that she "greeted" them. Something about this **"Greeting" changed Elizabeth's life**. Something about this good news was transformative.

First, baby John **leapt**. This was no ordinary natal movement. Luke uses that same word that describes [Jacob and Esau](#) struggling for position (Gen. 25:22) and the mountains and hills [skipping like lambs](#) (Psalm 114:4). I think we can safely conclude that Elizabeth and John were among the first people in the world to respond to the Gospel. John was born for this moment to hear the good news and leap! John knew that Yahweh [1 Tim 2:4 "wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."](#) **You** were born to be in relationship with the One

true God through Jesus Christ, but that relationship is only found through the Messiah. This is why John jumped!

The **birth** of Messiah allows you to have **new birth**. For those who have already believed and surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, think back to that moment you first leaped. **Can you remember the first time you heard the Gospel?** I mean really heard the gospel. **A young man name Blake**. I still remember my heart jumping at the thought the at God loves me and has provided a way for a relationship for a sinner such as I. Like John, you were born to leap at the Gospel and believe. **Do you?** Does your soul still rejoice at the hearing of the good news?

Something else divine happened at the greeting, an infant jumped and the **Spirit filled**. Such filling is common in the infancy account. **Zechariah** was filled with the Holy Spirit when John was born and **Simeon** (2:27) had the Holy Spirit upon him. The Spirit gives **Elizabeth** the ability to confess Jesus as Messiah and ***the Spirit gives that ability to everyone who believes in Christ***. This is the same Spirit that fills everyone who believes in the name of Jesus Christ and now lives inside you. **Are you living because of the Spirit?** Are you living in the Spirit? This is the power and the promise of the long awaited Messiah.

Like John you were born to believe. Can you declare today, “How could this happen, that the mother of **my Lord**.”

Born to Build (John 1:21) Those born again in Jesus are now born to build bridges for others to Christ.

You build bridges to Jesus when you realize it is not about you (1:22). A delegation from Jerusalem ventured to Perea to ask John *who* he was. The baptizer was clearly an eschatological figure. **He was John Wayne before JW existed.** John the Baptist was the dude living in the desert wearing camel-hair sheek, eating wild honey from a bee hive and biting the heads off locusts, and called the religious leaders snakes (Matt. 3:4). John was a dude’s dude and not scared of anyone.

This large delegation comes and asks him, “who are you?” At this moment, John has the ability to **make a name for himself**. Elijah? No! Prophet? No! rather, John emphatically refuses to make it about himself. You build bridges to Jesus when you glorify Christ and not yourself. John was a ***look at Him*** (Messiah) type person. **If you are in Christ, it is not about you!** There is no such thing as me-first Christianity.

But John does more than deflect praise, he redirects glory and honor to Jesus. So much so he says that he is not worthy to untie the sandal of the Messiah (1:27). **Rabbi Joshua ben Levi (A.D. 250) taught, “all manner of service that a slave must render to his master, the pupil must render to his teacher—except that of taking off his shoe.”** John was saying that he would do anything for his Jesus. You build bridges when you realize it’s not about you.

You build bridges to Christ when you raise your voice (1:23). We see this in Elizabeth’s life. John leapt in her womb and she blessed Mary loudly. Now, it’s John’s turn to raise his voice. Who are you? I am the voice (1:23) crying. John was appealing to **Isaiah 40:3**. A voice is used in an exclamatory way

meaning 'listen' someone is calling out! John's utterance was one in the wilderness making straight the way of the Lord.

Isaiah combines the **ancient picture** of the Lord coming to his people's aid arriving without fail, traveling without difficulty, and undelayed by hindrances. John's mission was to build bridges for Jesus. **The task of witness to Jesus is the same for us, clearing away obstacles that may keep people from coming to Jesus.** We must remove any hindrance so that fallen people can see their most glaring needs: their sin and need of repentance. Often, petty bickering, political rants, or even a loss of gospel primacy **acts as earmuffs** for those who desperately need to hear the voice of Christ! *For decades, the church has used the wrong voice and thus lost its voice in a world that is desperate for truth.*

So what should we say? Listen to what John says, "Here is the Lamb of God!" In modern vernacular, "there He is!" The designation with which John greets Jesus' appearance would have been **startling** to those who heard it for the first time. God's Lamb will take away sin by means of a sacrificial, substitutionary death.

You will never be able to point others to Jesus unless you know Him yourself. When you know Jesus personally, you can't help but introduce others to Him. **What do you say?** *This is Jesus, He is my friend, my salvation, my forgiveness, and my Lord. May we never be silent wanderers in the wilderness making difficult the way of the Lord. Build a bridge for someone today* so that Christmas will never be the same.

You build bridges to Jesus through faithful obedience (John 1:24) We find John the Baptist now born and living in the wilderness, but he was not alone. He attracted many who desired to be baptized, and also drew the attention of those who challenged his authority to baptize. **Baptism was common and many Jewish groups practiced 'proslyte baptism,' especially the Essene community in Qumran.** John was different than the Pharisees, his message insisted that personal repentance and faith were necessary. So important was baptism that Jesus himself was baptized by John 1:30. Baptism was a step of faithful obedience to the message of John the Baptist, making straight the way of the Lord.

Jesus himself demonstrated the importance of the bold display of faith (1:31). Jesus did not need his sin washed away. Jesus did not need repentance, and he did not need salvation. He set an example for you and I to follow. Every person who believes in Christ should be baptized (acts 2:38). Believers realize their sin separates them from God. They conclude that Jesus Christ's death on the cross bridges the gap between them and God.

Having decided to trust Christ alone for their salvation, they follow Christ in baptism as a symbol of their new life in Christ. *Your public display of faith through baptism builds bridges to others so that they might see Jesus. What keeps you from being baptized?*

Faithful obedience might begin with Baptist but it doesn't end there (John 1:22). When you obey Jesus in faithful dedication, you build bridges to Jesus. John was a man of righteousness, even in the wilderness. And when you live obediently for King Jesus, you display the glory of God. The people of God will fundamentally live different than those who do not know Yahweh.

*The glory of God is the manifest beauty of his holiness. **It is the going-public of his holiness. It is the way he puts his holiness on display for people to apprehend. So, the glory of God is the holiness of God made manifest.** –John Piper* Church, you are part of God's "going public" with His holiness in the world! Can someone look at your life and say, "wow I see the holiness of God in their life?" *Obedience is you pointing to Jesus (1:29) and saying "Here is the Lamb of God."*

Building bridges is not always easy. John believed so strongly in the Lamb who takes away sin that he lived his life to call others to forsake their sin and find repentance. One such man was a leader named Herod. King Herod lived a life filled with lust and took his brother's wife as his. John cried out, "this is not of the will of God." Don't sin!

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus relates in his *Antiquities of the Jews* that Herod killed John, stating that he did so, "lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his [John's] power and inclination to raise a rebellion, (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise), [so Herod] thought it best [to put] him to death." This was not a political rebellion, but a spiritual rebellion. What was the great influence? Holiness and the glory of God on display. John was not content to let others remain in their sin and go to hell. And I have a vision that because of this local gathering of saints, St. Clair county should be the most difficult place in the world to live and go to hell. It should be the most difficult place in the world for Satan and for anyone to remain in sin. Brother and sister, are you taking your sin seriously?
Building bridges to Jesus is not easy.

Is it worth it? Yes! It is worth our lives to live for the glory of Jesus. John would rather speak up for Jesus and die than to remain silent in sin.

Response: prayer, surrender to ministry, missions, give your life to Jesus, sing, silence?

The birth of Jesus is a picture that we must be **born again**, and that for all who believe, will have abundant life. Maybe the bridge built today was through the Spirit to your heart. Do you need to confess Jesus as Lord?

Now that you have heard this good news, God wants you to respond to Him. You can talk to him using words like this:

*Jesus today I **recognize** it is because of my (sin) bad actions that I need you.*

*I **believe** Christ came to live, die and was raised from the death—to rescue me from my sin.*

***Forgive** me. I turn from me and put my trust in You.*

*Know that Jesus is Lord and King of all and I will **follow** Him.*

Is your heart burdened for another? Will you build a bridge in prayer today?

Notes

Luke 1:39 In those days Mary set out and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judah **40** where she entered Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. **41** When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped inside her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Mary's visit to Elizabeth serves two literary purposes. First, it ties together the birth announcements, since John and Jesus are brought together (ECNT, 133).

Haste

The journey covering 80-100 miles would take three or four days (ECNT, 134).

From the Hebrew Bible, Luke knows that the promised land consists of hill and valleys (Bovon, 58).

Greeting

The meeting is initially described in simple terms, but Mary's arrival and the word of greeting bring a response of blessing and praise (ECNT, 134).

How does Elizabeth know about the child that Mary bears? It is possible that Mary's greeting included more than a mere hello. Perhaps Mary said something that suggested she bore a special servant, a special dignitary of the Lord. If so, Luke chooses not to narrative it. Rather, he literarily leaves the impression that it is by the Holy Spirit that Elizabeth perceived who was visiting her (ECNT, 136).

Luke does not give the content of Mary's greeting, because he is concerned above all with Elizabeth's reaction (Bovon, 58).

Leaping

The term for leaping occurs in Gen. 25:22 of fetal movement and in Psalm 114:4 of mountains leaping like rams. The movement in Genesis describes the struggle of Esau and Jacob for position within Rebekah (ECNT, 135).

This no ordinary natal movement. This is an act of the Holy Spirit within Elizabeth.

In antiquity, people made predictions about the future of children from the signs and wonders surrounding their birth. This joyful exclamation, like the leaping of a child, illustrates the new beginning in salvation history (Bovon, 59).

Holy Spirit

Such filling is common in the infancy account as various people address the key figures of the account and explain God's plan (Zechariah 1:57 and Simeon in 2:27 is led by the Spirit).

The Spirit for Luke is a Spirit who reveals, speaks, and guides (Luke 4:1; 12:12; Acts 15:28).

By the filling of the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth gets loud and blesses Mary as well as her baby Jesus in the womb (Anyabwile, 28).

42 Then she exclaimed with a loud cry: “Blessed are you among women, and your child will be blessed! **43** How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? **44** For you see, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped for joy inside me. **45** Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill what he has spoken to her!”

The fetal John testifies to Jesus’ presence by leaping in Elizabeth’s womb (ECNT, 132).

Leap

John’s leap suggests that he has initiated his work as the forerunner (ECNT, 138).

Believed

Two themes dominate this section, the first stresses faith in God’s promise and word. Mary is the forerunner of the true believer who trusts and responds to God’s word (ECNT, 139).

It is customary for us to think the first to confess that Jesus is the Christ was Peter. Actually the first to make this confession is the older woman, Elizabeth, who confesses Jesus is Lord even before Jesus is born (Anyabwile, 29).

The Spirit gives Elizabeth the ability to confess, and he gives that ability to everyone who believes in Christ.

John 1:21 “What then?” they asked him. “Are you Elijah?”

“I am not,” he said.

“Are you the Prophet?”

“No,” he answered.

John 1:22 “Who are you, then?” they asked. “We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What can you tell us about yourself?”

John’s emphatic “I” in his denial of his messiahship in the Greek text of 1:20 may also suggest that John is about to confess another as the Christ (Keener, 434).

The members of the deputation felt frustrated (Bruce, 48). John was clearly an eschatological figure, with this preaching of imminent judgment to be administered by the coming One.

The question was certainly appropriate” John not only had the demeanor of a prophet, but also resembled Elijah in his rugged lifestyle and powerful message (ECNT, 60).

It’s not about you

In other portions of the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus identified John the Baptist with the promised Elijah (Mt. 11:14; 17:12; Mk 9:13), but they never suggests that Baptist himself made the connection. Here he refused to make it—a refusal which suggests that he did not detect as much significance in his own ministry as Jesus did (Carson, 142).

John 1:23 He said, “I am a **voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord** just as Isaiah the prophet said.”

Is. 40:3 A voice of one crying out:
Prepare the way of the LORD in the wilderness;
make a straight highway for our God in the desert.

A voice is used in an exclamatory way meaning, ‘listen’ someone is calling out (Motyer, 300).

The voice is of a human voice, a messenger of God declaring His commands (Young, 26).

The voice remains anonymous because his identity must fall behind the glorious message he proclaims (Young, 27).

John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.”

Way

It combines the ancient picture of the Lord coming to his people’s aid with the practice of constructing processional ways for visiting dignitaries or for use by the gods as they were carried in procession (Motyer, 300).

He will arrive without fail, travel without difficulty and be undelayed by hindrances (Motyer, 300).

Conveys the image of preparing a roadway by clearing away the obstacles. The task of witnessing to Jesus today is similar: clearing away obstacles that may keep people from coming to Jesus, the most glaring being their sin and need of repentance (ECNT, 63).

John 1:24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. **25** So they asked him, “Why then do you baptize if you aren’t the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?”

There interest is in what authorizes John’s baptismal practices (Carson, 144).

John 1:26 “I baptize with water,” John answered them. “Someone stands among you, but you don’t know him. **27** He is the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I’m not worthy to untie.” **28** All this happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

Next day after John met the deputation from Jerusalem. Some weeks probably had elapsed since Jesus received baptism as John’s hands (Bruce, 50).

Modern Christians are so familiar with the entire clause that it takes an effort of the imagination to recognize it is not an obvious messianic designation. That fact has prompted the majority of modern interpreters to deny that John the Baptist made any such declaration (Carson, 148).

The designation with which John greets Jesus’ appearance is startling—at least, it must have been to those who heard it for the first time (Bruce, 52).

God’s Lamb will take away sin, presumably by means of a sacrificial, substitutionary death (ECNT, 67).

30 This is the one I told you about: ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’

The “ahead of me” may be read as a reference to preeminence; status conscience ancients allowed those of higher rank to enter or be seated before them as a mark of respect (Keener, 457).

Mark 1:7 He proclaimed, “One who is more powerful than I am is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. **8** I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

In his own estimation, John is not even worthy to untie the straps of Jesus’ sandals. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi (A.D. 250) taught, “all manner of service that a slave must render to his master, the pupil must render to his teacher—except that of taking off his shoe” (ECNT, 65).

31 I didn’t know him, but I came baptizing with water so he might be revealed to Israel.” **32** And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him. **33** I didn’t know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on—he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ **34** I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

Apparently John the Baptist had baptized Jesus some time earlier (Carson, 151).

Illustrations

It is as if you were standing before a dam 10,000 feet high filled with millions of gallons of water. And in

Application
