

Advent 3, December 13, 2020  
Text: John 1:6-8  
Theme: Rapping on Doors for Jesus

**“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.” We hear those words year after year. Usually, we hear them multiple times throughout the year since the first chapter of John is a foundational chapter for Christianity. We know that these words reference John the Baptist who came in advance of Christ to fulfill the prophecy that a man would come as a herald of Jesus. Isaiah says in chapter 40,**

**“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.” We know that prophecy is fulfilled with the coming of John the Baptist. He was the first prophet of God to prophesy since Malachi. That had been a 400-year dry spell. But I want to focus on one particular aspect of the text. The word “sent.” “There was a man SENT from God...”**

**Luther says,**

**“He did not come on his own, unauthorized.... He was to rap at the doors, arouse the Jews, and testify of the Lord” (AE 22:43). I**

**love the way Luther turns a phrase. He had a way of putting things into common terms that are not lofty or jargon filled. John was authorized to rap on the doors of the Jews. What would Luther say of us here in our neighborhood? All of us know how irritated we can become with the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons. Why is it that we get so irritated with them? When I was a kid, I can remember seeing them turn off the sidewalk and head up towards our house. My mom would jump up and turn the TV down, shut off the lights and give us the quiet signal. They would knock at our door and we would remain absolutely quiet until they went away. As a kid, I thought it was kind of scary. It was as though my mom was afraid of them and I wondered why?**

**As an adult, I have a better understanding. When I was young, my mom was not a theological giant. She had been raised as a quasi-Methodist but she had not done any real Bible study yet in her life. It was not until later, when we joined a Missouri Synod congregation that she was introduced to real serious Bible study. So, these Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons scared her because they seemed to know so much about the Bible because they had certain texts memorized, and yet they said things that our pastor said were false. She didn't know how to respond to them and their arrogance made her feel unsure of her own faith. That is helpful to**

**me now. Now, I understand that people who are not thoroughly trained in the Bible can be very intimidated by those who are or appear to be.**

**So, on the one hand we don't want to be those scary people who make people turn the TV down and hide in the darkened living room when we come. But on the other hand, we are like John the Baptist. We do not come to people unauthorized. The Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons are unauthorized. They have not been sent by God because they proclaim a message different from the one God gave us. We, however, have been sent to rap on the doors of unbelievers. God intends for us to tell what we know and, we are not telling what other human beings have said. We have been given the living Word of God. We are not called to argue our religious point of view with anyone. We are not called to go about condemning people for their sins. We are called to witness to people, love people, forgive people and in so doing, show people the power of our God.**

**Now you may be thinking of John the Baptist and remembering some of the harsh things he said to people. But the people whom he challenged were the people who were attacking him and proclaiming false teachings. The crowds loved John because instead of beating them over the head with made-up, human laws, he was offering**

**them the love and forgiveness of God. He was baptizing them for the forgiveness of sins, giving them the opportunity to be cleansed and free instead of being bound under laws.**

**That is our calling as well. People are in great need of forgiveness. People are in great need of love. We are the authorized representatives of God Almighty. He has sent us to rap on the doors not with condemnation or judgement but with the good news of Jesus.**

**During Advent, we are reminded that Jesus is coming soon so time is running out. Don't get all worked up about people who are hostile towards you or people who seem perfectly happy in their sin. Don't weigh yourself down with people who want to argue religion with you. Imagine that there are thousands of people standing on a train track with a 5 engine, 150 car freight bearing down on them. Warn who you can. Help who you can. Teach who you can and rejoice that you have been given the privilege of doing so. Jesus is coming and when the day is over, our work will be complete. Work while we have light and rejoice that we have light for now.**

**Hark! A thrilling voice is sounding!**

**"Christ is near," we hear it say.**

**"Cast away the works of darkness,**

**All you children of the day!"**