

The Secret to True Joy in Life Is Found in Our Learning to Point Others to Jesus

"Years ago," the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his sermon Sunday, "musical artist Michael W. Smith had a famous song in which he sang, 'The wind is moving, but I am standing still, a life of pages waiting to be filled . . . But this becoming is harder than it seems, . . . roaming through the night to find my place in this world.'"

"He was not alone," Pastor Thelander continued. "For each of us, life can sometimes be like a Rubik's cube, filled with diverse colors and pieces. We twist and turn the pieces, this way and that, seeking desperately to find that perfect combination where every piece fits, where the colors match, where the puzzle is solved, where everything falls into place."

"Every year at this time during Advent," he said, "we are introduced to this wildly colorful person of John the Baptist. He is one of those persons who makes us a little uncomfortable, perhaps because he is hard for us to figure out . . ."

"But there is one thing we can say about John with certainty: He had found his place in this world. He had discovered his purpose in life. . . . John knew who he was, and what he was put on

this earth to do. *He was put on this earth to point people to Jesus.* He went to the people in wardrobe and got the most bizarre costume on the set. He got one of those frizzed-out, rainbow-colored hairpieces, and a T-shirt that had the letters 'John 3:16' on it. Then he put a sandwich board sign over himself that said, 'Repent,' and he went out into the desert to the Jordan River. And at the Academy Awards that year, when it came time to hand out the Oscar for the 'Best Supporting Actor in a Dramatic Role,' the winner was John the Baptist for his role in *Prepare the Way*."

The role was especially difficult, because "John had been given the role of pointing to the lead actor in the play," but as of this time Jesus had not begun his ministry and could be described only as "someone you do not know" in the crowd.

"Think back about your activities and duties and actions this past week. Recall some of the places you went, some of the things you did, some of the people you encountered. . . . As you think about your week, know this: It is very likely that in one of those places, behind one of those faces, you encountered Jesus. There, in the midst of your life that was preoccupied by a hundred (p. 2→)



"Annunciation" by Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), *Galleria degli Uffizi*, Florence. © Web Gallery of Art, which says the following: "This is the third scene on the single panel predella of the San Marco Altarpiece. The angel Gabriel has just made a sweeping entry into Mary's astonishingly bare chamber, and is kneeling reverently before her and raising his hand in blessing. The Virgin has stopped reading and is humbly bowing her head. There is a door in the centre of the plain, gray walls, opening out onto a broad landscape." As we will hear Sunday, the angel said, "The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David," and "he will reign . . . forever."

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Sundays, 10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service

Sundays, 11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation

Sundays, 11:45 a.m.: Moderated post-service discussion

Monday, 6:00 p.m.: Christmas caroling in the parish

Wednesday, 7:30 p.m.: Christmas Eve Word & Table Service

For the poor (updated list): Fresh potatoes, paper plates, plastic silverware and napkin sets, turkeys, hams, canned yams, sweet potatoes, corn, green beans, cranberry sauce, ready-to-serve rolls, butter or margarine in 1-lb. tubs, stuffing mix, disposable salt/pepper shakers, frozen pies, onions, cake/dessert mixes, tamale-making ingredients: pork cushion meat, masa corn meal.

Readings, 12/21: 2 Sam. 7:4, 8-16; Ps. 132:8-18; Rom. 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38. **12/24:** Is. 9:2-7; Ps. 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20. **12/28:** Jer. 31:15-17; Ps. 124; Rev. 21:1-7; Mt. 2:13-18.

Prayer Emphases: Ukraine; African Methodist Episcopal Church; Grace Episcopal Church, Providence, RI, and the Rev. Robert T. Brooks; Christian Research Institute; parishioners on Lubkin Street.

(Sermon, cont'd.) different things, was the Godhead veiled in flesh that you did *not* see—but the important thing is . . . that he was there. He was present to you and *with* you through the lives of others who were pointing in his direction. . . . The secret to true joy in life is found in our learning to point others to Jesus. . . . We are just another face in someone else's crowd, but unbeknownst to them, . . . a grace is at work that shifts their gaze from us to Jesus."