

Baptism C 2019 SML
LK 3:15-16, 21-22

I pride myself in always being in control of my life. I usually accomplish what I set out to do. I could organize my days, my household, my business, my life. Days move faster when one knows what has to be done.

But one day I woke up and began to wonder why I wanted my days to move faster.

- ✓ Where were they leading me?
- ✓ What would be the end result?
- ✓ What did I ultimately hope to accomplish?

I knew I had to solve my own problems in life. It was the only way to take care of them. By myself. I hate to admit it, but life seems so empty and incomplete at times. It's like there was a piece missing that was crying out to be put into place.

This country has always been known for producing hot days and false prophets. I was never interested in hearing these men with their self-serving messages about how to live and who to love. But from time to time I would search them out, looking for refreshing water, only to find sand in the wind.

Then one day I heard about this man named John, John the Baptist, they called him, who would stand in the waters of

the Jordan and baptize, hence his name, telling his listeners to prepare, to change and to reform. Something about this message, trite as it was appealed to me. Maybe this one would be holding the key. Maybe something in his words would put the missing piece into place.

So I journeyed to the Jordan to see this John. Some called him a madman, some a prophet, but I withheld all judgment, wanting to decide for myself. When I arrived at the Jordan, there were a lot of people ahead of me waiting to get water poured over their heads. So many that I became annoyed. I knew I should have given myself more time to get there. I could have been in the front of the line rather than wasting time in the line.

I started to talk to the man in front of me. I did the polite thing – introduced myself and told him a little about myself, but what do you do after you've exhausted the normal pleasantries? I did what everyone else was doing. I started to complain: the line was too long, I bet the water will be too cold; John ought to have help; yada yada yada.

Looking at this Guy: just the way He stood, looking at the expression on His face, I thought to myself, "There's nothing missing in this Guy's life. What's He doing in line?" He listened

to my complaining, but only smiled in return. Never shared anything about Himself. Peaceful and Quiet. I'll just call Him "Peace and Quiet." I like the sound of that. "Peace and quiet."

"Well, you want to be left alone? Fine!" So we moved along at a snail's pace and since "Peace and Quiet" in front of me wasn't interested in conversation, I turned my attention to John and watched him. So determined, so vehement about his message, shouting about sin and the need to change.

Finally, it was His turn, "Peace and Quiet," the Guy in front of me. Fierce and raging just moments before, John all of a sudden became very docile and obviously distracted. I thought I heard John say something about him being baptized by the Guy in front of me, but I thought that to be odd. The sound of rippling water made it hard to hear. I'm thinking because this Guy was nothing but "peace and quiet," John refused to baptize Him.

Dear Lord! I hoped John wouldn't refuse me too. He probably knows I'm the complete opposite. I was complaining in line. Or better yet, John was getting bored with all these people to be baptized, he was looking to move through the line faster. But then he did baptize Him. And I was next. Baptize me and get me out of here. I had much to get done that day

and was well aware that I was behind schedule.

Then, literally, out of the clear blue (sky), the clouds parted, the sun shone and I heard what sounded like a voice from heaven. Couldn't be. Probably thunder or a voice echoing off the mountains.

So I said to "Peace and Quiet" in front of me, "Move along buddy. My turn." Finally!

But resolute John was now obviously shaken, distracted. He rushed me through. I didn't see what the big deal was. Didn't feel any different. Total waste of my time. Went home mad as mad can be that I had wasted so much time with "Peace and Quiet" front of me, and with John . . .

Three years went by and it was time for my yearly visit to Jerusalem for the Passover. Since time is money and organization is key, I arrived early to avoid the crowds. Hate crowds. This way I'd have time to visit the Temple and do some business on the side. The time for buying and sacrificing lambs is the perfect opportunity to make some business contacts.

So I'm in the city, not more than a few blocks, and what's the first thing I encounter but a crowd, at a crucifixion, and I began to curse the time I would lose getting through. Not one

being crucified, but three. But the Guy in the middle. I never forget a face – so important in business. The Guy in the middle was “Peace and Quiet!” the Guy I was in line with at the Jordan. Again, making me late with people jeering and gawking and blocking the road.

I knew “Peace and Quiet” wasn’t going to make it in life. He didn’t have the polish and social skills to get involved in everyday politics and business. He couldn’t even hold a friendly conversation in line.

At least the weather was on my side, as beautiful as that day we were baptized. But then, as fast as the weather turned beautiful at the Baptism, the weather turned ugly at His crucifixion. What is it with this Guy and the weather? This rain is going to slow me down.

I looked up at him on the cross, and saw “Peace and Quiet’s” Face now drenched in blood. I felt that empty, incomplete, “a piece is missing” feeling that led me to the waters of the Jordan years back. Nothing had much changed regarding how that feeling has lingered on and off these last three years, but odd it would return by just looking at His bloody face.

Nonsense. Grab hold of yourself, man. Stick to what you

know. Determination and organization and all things in life fall into place. Chop. Chop! Ignore your feelings. Be a man!

Feeling like myself again, I start on my journey home, grumbling with the men walking beside me, complaining that with the Passover come crowds and increased prices for sacrificial lambs.

But I did look back over my shoulder one last time. Could He, "Peace and Quiet" have been what I was looking for all these years? Maybe, just maybe?