

6There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

19This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." 21And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." 22Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' " as the prophet Isaiah said. 24Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" 26John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, 27the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." 28This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

This is how I remember hearing it: "LeBron will get the rebound – no he's letting it go to Z." I was in my car heading for home Tuesday night, listening to the Cavs game. Immediately I realized what had happened. Tuesday night was the night that Zydrunis Iglaskas, Z for short, was expected to break the Cavs all-time record for rebounds. The rebound that LeBron James did not grab but let fall to Z was the rebound that broke the record. The star stepped aside so another could be in the spotlight. It was a surprising moment, an unusual moment. Most often people are trying to grab all the glory for themselves these days. But for a moment LeBron stepped aside to let another bask in the glory.

They wanted to know if John, the baptizer, was the Messiah. In those days John was the superstar – people from all over were coming to hear him and to be baptized by him. Priests and Levites, religious leaders were sent to ask him if he was the long awaited one. John said, "I am not the Messiah."

They asked him, "Are you Elijah?" Elijah had been taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot – The prophet Malachi promised that Elijah would come back to usher in the day of the Lord. But John said, "I am not Elijah."

They asked him, "Are you the prophet?" Moses spoke of the day when the Lord would send a prophet like Moses to lead God's people into the glorious future God had prepared. But John said, "No, I am not the prophet."

Then they asked, "Who are you?"

John answered, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord." Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal."

John did not seek his own glory but pointed to another – to Jesus.

What a good thing it would be if the same was said of each of us - _____ did not seek her own glory but pointed to another, to Jesus.

The times we live in reward self-promotion. Let people know what you are doing – dress for success – show everyone that you are better than the competition. This is true in business, true in churches. If we do not promote ourselves, who will promote us? We will be pushed aside while those who tell all about the great things they are doing will be honored. But this is not the way it was with John. He pointed to Jesus. This was the role given to John by God. The first part of the gospel for today says, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to the light so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light but he came to testify to the light."

What is in it for me? That is the question the world teaches us to ask. But John asked instead, "What has God sent me to do?"

The answer for John was to point to the one who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. John stepped aside for Jesus, the very Jesus who laid down his life for his friends.

The one whom you and I call Lord did not live for his own glory, but gave himself for us.

The way of those whom God sends is different from the world's way. We need to pay attention to this. Our leaders are servants, John serving Jesus – Jesus serving sinners. And you and I?

Does Jesus die for you so that you can live for self and self alone? Or does he call you, invite you, into giving yourself for him, to him?

Our first lesson speaks of what the one sent by God will accomplish: He will bring good news to the oppressed, bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners. Day by day we are finding out that Jesus is able to do all of that in our lives and in the lives of others who believe.

The prophet says that those who are served by the Lord's anointed one will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord to display his glory. That is you – the planting of the Lord to display his glory.

Just as John's life was not all about John so your life is be a display of God's glory. What is that? - God's love in you, Jesus spirit alive in you.

When a person is baptized we have been handing a lit candle and speaking Jesus words: "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

You are a planting of the Lord to display his glory. Amen.