

Wednesday, December 12, 2018 – Advent Midweek II
“A Man Named John”

John 1: 6-9; 15

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Story Interrupted Structure

Adapted from CSL Advent Series “The Word Became Flesh”

Nadin Khoury was 13 years old, 5-foot-2, and weighed—soaking wet—100 pounds. Nadin’s mom had lost her job as a hotel maid and needed work so she had recently moved her family from Minneapolis to Philadelphia. In 2000 the family had escaped war-torn Liberia in West Africa. Nadin Khoury, then, was a new kid in Philly with a single mom who was an unemployed African immigrant looking for a job at a hotel. That’s the kind of kid bullies spot from 100 miles away. And they did. The bullies outnumbered Nadin seven to one. For thirty minutes seven teenagers hit and kicked Nadin Khoury and rubbed his face in dirt. Nadin survived the attack and would have likely faced more except for the folly of one of the bullies. He filmed it all and posted it on YouTube. Police saw it and the bullies were thrown behind bars.

A staffer at the morning show The View heard about it and invited Nadin to appear on the broadcast. Unbeknownst to Nadin, the producer had also invited three members of the Philadelphia Eagles football team to appear on the show as well. One was all-pro wide-receiver DeSean Jackson. Jackson said, “Nadin, I’m here for you man, anytime you need me.” Then, in full view of every bully in Philly, DeSean Jackson gave Nadin Khoury his cell phone number. Bullies think twice before they harass a kid who has an NFL player’s number on speed dial.

You have your fair share of bullies. So do I. Sin and shame, guilt and blame. But Jesus says in John 8:44 that the biggest bully on the block is a liar and the father of lies—Jesus even calls him a murderer. We know him as the devil and Satan. And Satan hits us with his lies and rubs our face in our dirt. He wants to destroy us. And so we run. And we run some more. And then we keep on running. That’s why God sent a man named John – not the guy who wrote our text – John the Baptist.

John (who wrote our Gospel) said, “There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness concerning that light, so that through him all people might believe.” (John 1:6–7) John the Baptist’s mission is “to witness concerning that light.” In fact, fourteen times in the fourth Gospel the word witness is connected with John the Baptist. Fourteen times! The best example is in John 1:29 where John the Baptist sees Jesus and this is

his witness, “Behold, the Lamb of God who is taking (present tense!) away the sin of the world.” John’s witness is “so that through him [Christ] all people might believe.” This is the first use of the word believe in John’s Gospel. It will occur ninety-six more times. This is the great goal of John’s Gospel! John 20:31, “These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Meanwhile, we’re all on the run. Satan is chasing us with his lies and seductions and half-truths. That’s why God sent a man named John—John the Baptist. John’s mission is to witness so we believe the Light. And who is the Light? In John 8:12 Jesus, says, “I am the light of the world!”

“He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every person was coming into the world.” (John 1:8–9) John’s message is simple. He isn’t the light. John isn’t the message. John is the messenger. Let me say that again. John isn’t the message. John is the messenger. John 1:8, “He was not the light.” John 1:20, “I am not the Christ.” John 1:21, “I am not Elijah.” John 1:21, “I am not the prophet.” John 1:27, “I am not worthy to untie his sandals.” No wonder John the Baptist says in John 3:30, “He must increase and I must decrease.”

When the liar is rubbing my face in my sin and shame, guilt and blame, too often I look for help in all the wrong places. It’s easy to look to other people. And my job. And my accomplishments. And my money. And my vacations. And my stuff. These are good lights. These are grand lights. But these are not the Light. There is only one Light of the world who can defeat my demons and darkness. John’s message? This Light is Jesus. John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” John 1:14, “The Word became flesh.” It’s this Jesus, true God and true man, who fights the bully on our behalf! In Matthew, Mark, and Luke Jesus frequently casts out devils and demons, but in John there is just one exorcism. John 8:31, “Now the prince of this world is cast out.” That’s called one and done! One and done! And when is the prince of this world cast out? John 8:32 tells us. When the Son of Man is lifted up on the cross for us.

Jesus fights for your health and for your family. Jesus fights for your salvation and for your restoration. And Jesus fights for your final resurrection. Are the odds against you? Is the

coach against you? Is the boss against you? Is your health against you? Are your friends against you? Difficult, for sure.

But Jesus fights for you. Yes you. You with the broken past. You with the aging body. You with the absentee dad. You with the critical mom. You with the lost job. You with the bad back, the bad credit score, the bad grade, and the bad break. Jesus fights for the yous of the world. Are you a you? Then Jesus fights Satan for you. Jesus defeats Satan for you. It happened on a God-forsaken cross and confirmed in an empty tomb. And the day is coming when Jesus will destroy Satan for you. Jesus even gives you his number on speed dial.

Here's the point. John 4 says that Jesus is greater than Jacob. John 5 says that Jesus is greater than Moses. John 8 says Jesus is greater than Abraham. Here's the biggest point. John 5:39 says that Jesus is greater than the entire Old Testament—with its prophets, priests, and kings; with its tabernacle, temples, and Torah. That's why John the Baptist still witnesses and still cries out. There's no power, no authority and no one greater or stronger or more loving than Jesus.

My sister and her husband have multiple pets, currently three cats and two dogs. One day, shortly after their move to Manhattan Beach, in a neighborhood with hills as steep as what you see in San Francisco or Pittsburgh, my Dad opened the door to their house not paying close enough attention to their Golden Retriever/lab mix named Nala and their now deceased Boxer named Sandy. Off to the races – before we know it, they were rushing down the street and my poor Dad who probably hasn't run anywhere for any reason in 20 years is chasing these dogs up and down these hills. When the dogs finally stopped and my Dad got close, after he caught his breath he managed to call out to Sandy about 20 feet away. Upon hearing her name, what do you think she did? Sandy ran some more, of course.

So do you. So do I. We all run. And we run some more. And then we keep on running. Because he's after us. "He?" You know. The bully on the block—the father of lies, the devil himself. But we don't have to run through life. None of us has to run through life.

Because God sent a man named John—John the Baptist. John's mission, John's message and John's mandate are all about Jesus. And Jesus fights for you. So stop running so

frantically and fearfully and instead stop, turn around, look straight into the Savior's tender eyes.
And then fall into his strong and loving arms! Amen.