

Waymaker

1. Warm-up: On Sunday Jeff reminded us of what the church has planned for the Christmas season, including a Church Family Open House at Jeff and David's home on Christmas Day (10838 Midnight Dr., Indianapolis). Jeff showed photos of various holiday dishes David likes to make, including fruit salad, fancy coleslaw, acorn squash, crab cakes, apple fritters, ham-hock green beans, turkey, cranberry apple compote, lemon cranberry cake, etc., etc. What's one of your favorite holiday foods?
2. Sunday's scripture focused on an obscure part of the biblical Christmas story that tells us about the birth of John the Baptist. Jeff said how odd it seems that the story of Jesus' birth actually begins with the story of the birth of different miracle child. John's story almost feels like an intrusion or distraction from the story of Jesus. But if God inspired Luke to begin the story of Jesus with the story of John, it must be for a very important reason. So let's read Luke 1:5-17, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Do you believe in angels? Why or why not?
 - b. Verse 12 tells us that Zechariah was terrified when he saw the angel. Have you (or someone you know) ever encountered an angel? What was it like? If you've never encountered an angel, how do you think you'd feel if you did?
 - c. Verses 16-17 describe the special mission John was to fulfill. "He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before the Lord . . . to make ready a people prepared for the Lord," i.e., Jesus. Later Jesus told his disciples, "If you are willing to accept it, John is Elijah who is to come." Matthew 11:14. Do you believe God ever reincarnates people? If so, when and why?
 - d. To get a flavor for the message John the Baptist proclaimed, read Luke 3:7-16 as printed on p. 3. What strikes you about his message?
3. John's special mission was to get lots of people excited and ready to follow Jesus as soon as he burst onto the scene, so that Jesus' ministry could launch with stratospheric speed. From this, we drew our key lesson on Sunday. Jeff put it this way, "Jesus came to us as Son of God. He was the most powerful and impactful person to ever live. Yet, despite all his power, even Jesus couldn't do it all on his own. Even he needed someone to prepare the way for him – to be his Waymaker." Suppose John the Baptist had refused to fulfill his special mission as a Waymaker for Jesus. Do you think Jesus could have still succeeded? How might John's absence have affected Jesus' mission and ministry?
4. Given the magnitude of Jesus' mission, it's easy for us to see why he needed a special forerunner to serve as a Waymaker to help launch his movement. But most of us don't see ourselves as significant enough to warrant having our own Waymaker. Jeff challenged us to rethink that. Most of us will toil in obscurity and never become

world famous, but that doesn't mean we don't have mission critical things to accomplish for God. Like the coal miners of Great Britain during World War II, we all have a mission critical role to play.

- a. Do you believe your life is significant? Why or why not?
 - b. Read Bishop Claude Alexander's quote on p. 3. Do you buy what he's saying? Is there a particular phrase in his quote that strikes a chord with you?
5. St. Teresa's famous 16th century poem reminds us that "Christ has no body now on earth but ours." We are called to be his hands and feet in the world today. In other words, we are called to carry forward the work of Jesus in our time. When we see it that way, we begin to realize our own significance and why we too need our own John-the-Baptist Waymakers to prepare us to fully achieve our God-given purposes.
- a. Tell us about someone God has used to help you to live more fully into God's purposes for your life.
 - b. When Bill Murray became suicidal early in his career, an encounter with an old painting by a dead French artist named Jules Breton gave Bill the flash of insight he needed to pull himself together and choose to live. Bill's story reminds us that God can even use people we've never met to dramatically influence our lives. Tell us about someone you've never met – maybe a writer, philosopher, singer, artist, leader, relative, or ancestor – whom God has used to influence your life.
6. Jeff shared the story of a relatively obscure politician from the 60s and 70s named Shirley Chisholm who became the first African American woman elected to Congress, then had the audacity to run for President in 1972. Her Presidential campaign failed miserably by conventional standards, yet her example provided inspiration for a future generation of groundbreaking politicians, including Nancy Pelosi (first female Speaker of the House), Barak Obama (first African American President), Hilleary Clinton (first female nominated to run for President), Kamala Harris (first female Vice President and first African American Vice President), and just last week Hakeem Jeffries (first African American Minority Leader of the House). Each of these leaders point to Shirley Chisholm as an inspiration. She, in turn, says it was her Grandma who lived on an obscure farm in Barbados who instilled confidence in her and taught her that she was somebody. But for that obscure Grandma, we may have missed an entire generation of groundbreaking leaders. All of which reminds us that we shouldn't just be thankful for those who've been Waymakers in our life. We should also realize that each of us is called to be a Waymaker for others.
- a. Who's someone you have been a Waymaker for in your past?
 - b. Who's someone you're called to be a Waymaker for now or in the near future?

Never underestimate the importance of your influence. Your life matters!

Luke 1:5-17

5 In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. 6 Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. 7 But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

8 Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. 10 Now at the time of the incense-offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. 11 Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. 13 But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. 14 You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. 16 He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'

Luke 3:7-16

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'

10 And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' 11 In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' 12 Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' 13 He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' 14 Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.'

15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'

Bishop Claude Alexander

"There is a purpose for your being here. You are meant to answer something, solve something, provide something, lead something, discover something, compose something, write something, say something, translate something, interpret something, sing something, create something, teach something, preach something, bear something, overcome something, and in doing so, you improve the lives of others under the power of God, for the glory of God."