

DECEMBER 11 2025 FATHER PETER JAE CHOI

There is a story told of two friends, Bob and Charles, who grew up together in a rural area. Charles went to university, and became a successful business man, while Bob remained on the farm.

So Charles invited Bob one day, to show him what life in the city was like. While they were walking down the busy downtown street, Bob noticed the sound of a cricket. So he stopped to look for the cricket.

Charles asked, "What are you doing?"

"I'm looking for the cricket," he replied.

"How could you possibly pick up the sound of a cricket from all the noise of all these cars and people walking? You must have an amazing sense of hearing."

Bob replied, "No, my hearing is average." Then he scooped down on the grass area, and found a cricket. Then Bob said to Charles, "Watch this." Then he reached into his pocket, and pulled out a handful of coins, and threw them in the air. All the coins instantly fell on the pavement, and made a clinking noise. Immediately, people who were within a short distance from them stopped and turned their heads, and looked around to see if the money that hit the pavement was theirs.

Bob says, "Did you see what happened? People didn't notice the cricket, but they noticed the sound of coins. It's all about what you are tuned into."

The moral of the story is that people are often so focused on worldly aspects of life, like money, or just daily distractions, that they missed out on other more meaningful or important aspects of life. To hear the sound of the cricket we just have to adjust our focus.

John the Baptist was a man who dedicated his life to God. He lived like a hermit, embraced the life of penance by renouncing all worldly comforts. He announced the coming of the Messiah, and preached the message of repentance as a preparation for the coming of Christ. He told tax collectors to not collect more than they have to, soldiers to not falsely accuse people, and extort money from them. And those who had extra food and clothing to share with those who didn't have any.

In other words, he taught them to adjust their focus away from accumulating wealth by unjust means, and hoarding wealth for themselves. He encouraged them to pursue a life of justice and mercy.

So, as you can imagine, it's not at all surprising to see Jesus praising John the Baptist, by calling him the greatest. And yet, we are left confused when Jesus said, "Yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." What did Jesus mean by that?

John the Baptist stood at the doorsteps of the kingdom, pointing towards Christ. But the one who followed Christ, the one who received the Holy Spirit through baptism, the ones who live in relationship with Jesus, get to live inside what John could only announce. John the Baptist was the greatest of the old way, but we are called to live in the grace of Christ. To have access to something deeper, fuller, and more powerful.

God was going to do something radically new with his coming, his presence, and the mission—that his death and resurrection. God didn't just want to be near his people. He actually wanted, and still wants to be, part of our family.

In the first reading, God revealed his tender love for his people, with promise of help and protection. "I am the Lord, your God. Fear not, I will help you." "I will answer them, and not forsake them." God called himself the redeemer. A word that carried the special meaning, and was

reserved for a particular person within the family. In fact this was the first time God ever called himself, as a redeemer, "go'el," in Hebrew.

The word go'el refers to the male, who had a duty to protect, defend, and restore his family. For instance, he was obligated to redeem, meaning to buy back the family members from prison, or a property that had been lost due to poverty or debt. He also carried the responsibility of avenging the death of any family member. So by calling himself as go'el, God was telling the Israelites that he will protect them, he will defend them against their enemies, and that he will restore their honour, and promise inheritance.

John the Baptist only got to announce the coming of Christ as the redeemer, but we, on the other hand, through baptism, became children of God, members of God's family, and heirs to God's kingdom, just as promised in our first reading.

Even though we inherited the kingdom of God that John the Baptist announced, we still need to prepare the way of the Lord. Making a straight path for the Lord. Making room, staying awake, and being ready. We need to be intentional about our faith, because today's society requires courage and boldness for us to live them out.

We may not experience violence or persecution against the Christians here in Canada, but many of our brothers and sisters have to live in fear of persecution every day, for having faith just like us.

In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us to have the courage to live out our faith he said, "The kingdom of God suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force." Obviously Jesus isn't endorsing violence or calling us to fight with others. Rather Jesus is asking us to fight the spiritual battle. To protect the kingdom of God, entrusted by God, we have to fight

against temptations and from worldly distractions that can destroy the kingdom of God within us.

This means we can't choose God and choose faith only when it is convenient, and fits into our schedule, or when it doesn't conflict with our plans. We have to make a conscious effort, and willing to make sacrifices to make God and his kingdom our priority.

John the Baptist not only preached the coming of Christ, and called others to repentance, but he lived out what he preached. We need to do the same. Let us not only preach the coming of God, but lead by example, as John the Baptist did. We can then usher God into our lives, and make God's presence within our lives become more visible.