

St. John the Baptist, last OT prophet, to usher in the day of the Christ, in a time when those who believed in God were a tiny, persecuted minority, when the world worshipped itself and false gods; even within the people of God, rulers were corrupt, immoral; political collaborators with their enemies, even to their own people -manipulated them, used as ponds for gain. No evil today was not common to the world John lived in. In our fallen world, evil wins. The world Jesus comes into. John the Baptist announced His arrival to a world obsessed with debauchery, violence, deviancy, and death. John's message –God's message– **repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.**

In our fallen world, evil wins. If you hold fast to your Christian faith and confession, you may be hated, abused, mocked, sued, fired, your life ruined, your reputation trashed; in some places, arrested, tortured, put to death. But if you celebrate evil, you will be loved. You'll have plenty of supporters, followers on social media. Your life will be easier. You will have more opportunities, less responsibility, fewer burdens from others and have your whims satisfied; use people for pleasure, and destroy, cancel anyone that gets in your way – while claiming to be good and virtuous and loving.

This isn't anything new, you can ask John the Baptist. In our fallen world, evil wins. The news this week angers and saddens us in the loss of our soldiers and other lives. Lord have mercy.

Evil of man rages, not just in Afghanistan, but in our own communities, abortion clinics, in schools, in all the media. Facts, biology, truth does not matter, but feelings, experience, perception are more important. Personal belief trumps God's Word. Like with Herod, he feared what others think more than what God thinks.

In our fallen world, evil wins. John the Baptist is put to death by the government, an evil ruler, put to death... because he preaches against an immoral, sinful sexual relations.

And as Christian, you are not immune to the sin and evil. Your own struggles to heed God's Word. Afflicted with sins, temptations, easily falling into sin, growing numb to, dismiss pet sins; how dare anyone think you should change how you live for the sake of our Lord's Word and His Church. Repent. As well, how can you harbor any grudges against someone for whom Christ has died for? Repent of your hardness of heart, humble yourself unto the Lord, forgive as you are forgiven.

In our fallen world, evil wins, but in our Lord's Kingdom, evil never wins, not ever. This isn't anything new, you can ask John the Baptist. If you join the ranks of our Lord, His church, hold to His truth -the world will hate you, rage against you, come after you, perhaps seek your well-being, yet you are safe, secure, in good company, what can man do to you? Forgiven. You have the treasures of heaven, even Christ Himself.

Any evil people, evil forces cannot win, cannot overcome you. Just think of it! To that end, John the Baptist still goes before the Lord. John is not silenced, voice still heard in the Church, preparing sinners by preaching repentance and Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

One of our Church fathers quipped, if you want to find the true church on earth, look for the trail of martyr's blood. From today's first reading, **but, how long, O Lord? How long?** Is that not the cry and prayer of your heart? This isn't anything new, you can ask John the Baptist.

Suffer patiently, if you are called to suffer; serve faithfully, wherever you are called to serve, even if it be in a deep dark dungeon.

Do not despair, believe the words, promises of God. If you hold fast to your Christian faith and confession, you will be saved, vindicated, given the gift of eternal life, dwell with God forever in glory, joy, riches without measure. For he who believes and is baptized shall be saved.

So, faith looks at John's death, says, **This is the Gospel of the Lord.** God is at work in John's death; constantly working in your life. Your faith is not blind. We see evil, tragedy and persecution. But faith looks through the mess of this world to the cross. Faith looks to Jesus crucified for you, for John, and for this evil, sinful world.

Your Lord gives to you today, the same thing He gives John in prison, before his death, Something more powerful than any weapon, more powerful than any evil, more powerful than even death. Jesus gives John and you what? Scripture, His Words. That is enough. It is more powerful, has more authority, brings life -far greater than you can imagine. Jesus doesn't break John out of prison or rescue him then, but does even more. Frees him from all sin, gives him a life that does not end, and even in this world of hate and evil and death, in this worlds as man rages, evil will not win over the Lord's people. His Word and uniting you to Him in Sacraments, strength for you to endure these days. What can man do to you? This isn't anything new, you will speak with John the Baptist. In our fallen world, evil wins, but in our Lord's Kingdom, for you, in your life, evil never wins, not ever. For you are the Lord's.