

The Minor Festivals of the Church Year

St. John, Apostle & Evangelist – December 27th

On December 27th, the second day after Jesus birth, we celebrate the *Minor Festival: St John, Apostle and Evangelist*. John was one of the sons of Zebedee, who along with his older brother James were called by Jesus to be his first disciples (*Matthew 4:18-22*). Jesus gave James and John the name “Boanerges” which means *the sons of thunder*. John would become known as “the disciple whom Jesus’ loved,” as he refers to himself in the Gospel that bears his name (*John 21:20*). Of the twelve disciples, John was the only one who did not forsake Jesus during the hours of his suffering and death. With the faithful women, he stood at the cross, where our Lord made him the guardian of his mother (*John 19:26*).

After Pentecost, John spent his ministry in Jerusalem, and in Ephesus where tradition says he was the bishop of the church. He wrote the fourth Gospel that bears his name (*John*). He wrote three general epistles of Christian encouragement (*1 John, 2 John, 3 John*), as well as the book containing glimpses of the apocalypse and future glory (*Revelation*). Especially memorable in his Gospel are; the account of the wedding at Cana (*John 2:1-12*), the “Gospel in a nutshell” (*John 3:16*), Jesus’ saying about the Good Shepherd (*John 10:11-16*), the raising of Lazarus from the dead (*John 11*), and Jesus’ encounter with Mary Magdalene on Easter morning (*John 20:11-18*).

According to tradition, in his later years, John was banished to the Island of Patmos off the coast of Asia Minor by the Roman Emperor Domitian. There John lived to a very old age, surviving all the other disciples, and died at Ephesus around 100 AD. John’s long life allowed him to write much about the Savior he confessed and about the eternal glories that await God’s people. He wrote about Jesus’ birth, life, death, ascension, and about Jesus’ final coming on the Last Day. He also wrote about how Christians are to put their faith into practice, as they live each day in the certainty of their salvation. We thank the Lord for St. John for through him we have been given the Word of eternal life and that our faith may firmly ever stand on Jesus, our Lord, our God, our Savior. “*These words are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*” (*John 20:31*).

The Minor Festival: St John, Apostle and Evangelist (*December 27th*), is nestled in between the minor festivals of St. Stephen (*December 26th*) and the Holy Innocents (*December 28th*). These three festivals are bonded together as they weave together the three possible outcomes of following Christ into death and heaven. St. Stephen was the first Christian martyr who willingly suffered death for Christ, a martyr in will and deed. St John was always willing to die for his Lord but was spared martyrdom as he died of natural causes, a martyr in will but not in deed. The Holy Innocents were the children who were killed by King Herod in his attempt to kill the baby Jesus, they were martyrs in deed but not in will, as their lives were vainly stricken from the earth. These three accounts and festival days remind us that whatever we may suffer in this world, whether willingly or unwillingly, we suffer for the sake and name of Christ. We will continue to live and do all things, the name of Jesus may be proclaimed to the ends of the earth.

Read **1 John Chapters 1 & 2**.... as today’s Scripture Lesson.

Blessings to you and your families,
Pastor Matthew Guse