

REFLECTIONS

December 4, 2005

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.

John 1:6-7

Planting Seeds and Growing Trees

Part one in the series *Preparing for Christmas*

Johnny had a picture in mind as he set out on his mission in life. John Chapman was his name, but we all know him best as Johnny Appleseed. In his mind was a picture of blooming apple trees in the wilderness with fragrant blossoms that promised a fruitful harvest. True to his vision, Johnny lived in the wilderness and went about the Northwest Territory clearing the land, planting seeds, and growing trees. Although he lived and worked alone, he loved people and especially children. Often after a simple meal, he would capture their attention by telling stories or reading from the Bible.

Johnny Appleseed didn't harvest the apples, he only planted the seeds and grew the trees. His mission in life was to pave the way for an abundant harvest. The apple harvest was left for someone else to do, but without his role there would not be one.

Such was also the mission of another man named John. We know this one as John the Baptizer. Much like Johnny Appleseed, John the Baptist spent most of his life alone in the wilderness. "*He lived on locusts and wild honey and his clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist.*" (Matthew 3:4) And he too had a picture of the countryside. His vision was to "*make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it.*" (Isaiah 40:3-5) The seeds John planted and the trees he grew introduced a pathway for the Christ to be born into the lives of others. The birth of Christ into our lives is the day we celebrate as Christmas.

Maybe the mission is not as clear to us as it was to Johnny Appleseed or John the Baptist, but God has a mission for each of our lives too. For some it will be reaping a fruitful harvest from trees someone else planted while for others it will be clearing land, planting seeds, and growing trees. Through simple things like telling stories or reading from the Bible we plant seeds that introduce others to the path for Christ to be born into their lives. And on the day of that birth we will celebrate Christmas.

"You are the light of the world,"

Richard +

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