

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

SERMON NOTES

Week 3 December 15, 2024

"The Fruit of Repentance"

Luke 1:80, 3:11-14; Mark 1:5; Matthew 3:1-2, 5-8



I. John the Baptist and the Dead Sea Scrolls

- A. A number of scholars believe that _____ grew up in the Qumran community.
- B. The Essenes believed that if you want to please God, you need to get away from the _____ as far as possible. John the Baptist disagreed.
- C. The question for Christians in the 21st century is whether the church is a hospital for _____ or an exclusive club for saints.

II. The Message of John the Baptist

- A. *Metanoia* (Repentance) is a _____ of mind, resulting in a change of heart, leading to a change of actions.
- B. *Hamartia* (Sin) means to miss the _____.
- C. Our preparation during the season of _____ involves self-examination and repentance.

III. Baptism

- A. The early church attributed different meanings to _____.
 - Forgiveness
 - New birth
 - Living water
 - Sign of the Holy Spirit
 - Initiation into God's family
 - Jesus' death and resurrection
- B. For those of us who have been baptized, it's important to _____ your baptism.

IV. The Fruit of Repentance

- A. We are to produce _____ worthy of repentance which is generosity, compassion and acts of mercy.
- B. Every one of us is called to be a John the _____ for somebody else.

Things I Would Like to Remember About This Message



ASBURY DAILY STUDY GUIDE *December 16-21, 2024*

INTRODUCTION

A number of scholars believe John the Baptist grew up in a monastery in Qumran with a Jewish sect known as the Essenes. The Essenes influenced John, but he disagreed with their theology that to please God you needed to withdraw from society. John believed we were called to take God's message to the people. So John began doing that by telling people to prepare for the messiah through baptism and repentance. So what does John's message mean for us today?

Monday: Isaiah 40:3-5

John the Baptist fulfilled Isaiah's words as Jesus' forerunner. Yet John and Jesus were poor peasants, in no way part of Israel's elite. How did Isaiah's image of a king coming to town, of God returning to the center of Israel's life, help people in Jesus' day (as well as us) to grasp Jesus' royal identity as ruler of all creation?

Tuesday: Mark 1:4-8

In verse 4, the phrase "Changing their hearts and lives" translates a form of the single Greek word *metanoia*. It's often translated just "repenting," but a scholarly handbook for Bible translators noted that the word "does not mean simply 'to be sorry about' or 'to regret,' but rather involves a change of both attitude (or heart) and of conduct." * In what ways has a change of attitude or heart showed itself in changed conduct in your life?

Wednesday: Matthew 3:1-6

We saw yesterday that John's call for even ethnic Hebrews to accept baptism as a sign of repentance was strikingly different from most religious teaching. Matthew wrote that "as they confessed their sins, he baptized them." What role, if any, does confession play in your relationship with God? If God already knows where you have failed, for whose benefit is confession important?

Thursday: Matthew 3:7-12

In verses 9-10, John bluntly challenged those who thought their ethnic or religious heritage alone could keep them close to God. Have you ever known (or been) someone who hoped that family tradition or church affiliation could take the place of a living, life-changing personal connection with God? Do religious as well as non-religious and nominally religious people need to hear and heed John's call to repent?

Friday: Luke 3:1-14

Scholar N. T. Wright wrote, "John was... preparing a pathway for the Lord himself to return to his people. This was the time. Rescue was at hand." ** How did John's specific, practical counsel in verses 11, 13 and 14 prepare a pathway for the Lord to reshape the lives of tax collectors, soldiers and "the crowd"? In what way(s) is the Lord calling on you to reshape your life this Advent?

MOVING FORWARD

John was right about not withdrawing from society. The church was not meant to be a club for saints but a hospital for sinners. And during this season of preparation we are called to spiritual self-examination and repentance. His message also makes it clear that we are meant to remember our baptism and to produce fruit worthy of repentance which is generosity, compassion and acts of mercy. And finally, we are all meant to be a John the Baptist for someone else.

Answers to the sermon notes: IA) John, B) world, C) sinners. IIA) change, B) mark, IIC) Advent. IIIA) baptism, B) remember. IVA) fruit, B) Baptist.

* Barclay M. Newman and Philip C. Stine, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1988, p. 58.

** N. T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone (New Testament for Everyone)* (p. 33). SPCK. Kindle Edition.