

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Week 3 December 15, 2024

“The Fruit of Repentance”

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, you sent your servant John into the wilderness to prepare a people for you by baptism. As we study his ministry today, may your Spirit prepare us to bear ever more faithful witness, in word and deed, to him into whose death and resurrection we have been baptized, your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Luke 1:80 (NIV)

And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel

Matthew 3:1-2 (NIV)

¹In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ²and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Matthew 3:5-8 (NIV)

⁵People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Luke 3:11-14 (NIV)

¹¹John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.” ¹²Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?” ¹³“Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them. ¹⁴Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?” He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.”

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Week 3 *December 15, 2024*
“The Fruit of Repentance”

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?

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.

QUESTIONS

1. If there was one Christmas present that you could have this year, what would it be? Why?
2. Do you believe that the church should be a hospital for sinners or an exclusive club for saints? Explain.
3. What do you think about when you hear the call to repent?
4. During the sermon, Pastor Eric said that repentance is a “change of mind, resulting in a change of heart, leading to a change of actions.” Can you give an example of repentance in your life that led to a change of action? Explain.
5. During the sermon, Pastor Eric said “we are to produce fruit worthy of repentance which is generosity, compassion and acts of mercy.” Give an example of where this is evident in your life.
6. During the sermon, Pastor Eric said “we are all called to be a John the Baptist (prepare the way of the Lord) for someone else.” One way to do that is to invite someone to a Christmas Eve service. Who can you invite this year?

FINAL APPLICATION

This week, how can you be a John the Baptist for someone else?