



Scripture Reference: Luke 3:1-6

Preached on Facebook LIVE on April 26, 2020

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Take your copy of God's Word and turn with me to Luke 3. Before we get into the message, let's read together His Word, which is a Scripture taken from Isaiah 40.

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ²while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. ³ And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, ⁴ as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight. ⁵ Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; ⁶ And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' "

Many years ago, way before televisions, cellphone, or internet, people had to figure out a way to get emergency messages or news out to the community. Many people back then also could not read, so just writing it and distributing the news wouldn't have helped much.

In medieval times, large bells were sounded as a way of notify people of fires, upcoming storms, or approaching troops. Later on, bells sounded to indicate that

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church or school was about to start. However, one of the fastest ways for people to know exactly what was taking place was to turn to a person called a Town Crier.

These Town Criers stood out from the average citizen. They would dress in fancy clothes, with a funny shaped hat, and carrying a hand-bell. The crier would often nail a document to a post in the town, but most people couldn't read it, so the crier would read the document aloud. Especially, if the news came from the king, the Town Crier would stand before the crowd and loudly exclaim, "Hear ye, Hear ye!" Then the news would be told to everyone that would listen to it.

What this world needs more of today is for more Christians to be Town Criers. My friends, we have been given a message, not from just a king, but have been given a warning from the King of Kings. We need to stand out from the crowd and boldly cry out that Jesus is coming again. We've been given this letter (hold up Bible) from God Himself that this world needs to know before it's too late.

Back in history, people couldn't read the message, so the crier was required to read it to them. That was a physical problem the people had. However, today people are suffering from a spiritual blindness and disregard for the message. We need more children of God to cry the same message that John the Baptist declared. We need people that are not ashamed of what God's Word says, and will boldly speak to prepare others for the coming of the LORD. We need some more voices crying out in the wilderness that Jesus is near.

The Bible tells that John the Baptist dressed a little different than the people he ministered to. Scripture tells us that he wore a garment of camel hair. He was different from the rest of the world. Today we need people are willing to stand out from the world. The Bible instructs us to not be conformed to this world.

Transitional Sentence:

Just like John the Baptist brought a message to prepare the coming of the Messiah, I believe God is seeking bold Christians to stand up and prepare the way for the Second

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Coming of the LORD. John's message was so simple: the Messiah is near, the Messiah is near...get ready, because the Messiah is near.

This morning my goal is simple. We are going to look at the message of John and learn the formula that he preached to get people ready coming of the King, and ways we can prepare ourselves and others for His next coming.

Introduction to John the Baptist

Little is known about this great prophet outside of the Scriptures. The Bible tells us that he was the son of a priest named Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth. Both were advanced in years, but God blessed them with their first child even in their old age. They were promised that this child would be the forerunning, who would preach to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah.

Elizabeth and the mother of Jesus were cousins. John was born about 6 months before Jesus, and from all accounts, it does not appear that they were raised together or even knowing each other. Before Jesus started His ministry, John was already preaching of the coming Messiah. He was already baptizing, and preaching repentance. John's message had only one topic. He didn't preach about the things happening around him, he didn't preach on family or career growth, he didn't preach on deep theological topics or preach beautiful orated messages. His message was simple.

The Bible says that he was the voice that cried in the wilderness. The word "cry" is the Greek word "Boao" (BO - AH - OH). That word literally means that to speak in a loud, strong voice or a loud voice of joy or pain. John didn't water the message down. He preached the Word that the world needed to hear. My friends the world still needs to hear this message.

It's great to hear moving message. It's good to have Bible studies, and fellowships, but what this world needs now is to hear the words of John. We are living in the End Days, and we need to preach with a sense of urgency. Urgency, because I don't want my family missing out on Heaven. Urgency, because without repentance and a belief in

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Jesus there are going to many of our friends and family who are going to burst Hell wide open.

John did not bring a message of judgment, but a message for you to judge yourself. Admit it, we've all done wrong. We've all sinned. With sin in our life we have to repent. That word literally means "Stop." How did the people deal with John's message?

*"Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; ⁶ and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins."
(Matthew 3:5-6)*

Verse 4: John's primary message was to "prepare the way of the LORD." That literally means that John is preaching to get people to create a holy environment or place that Christ is allowed in your life. It is literally getting rid of all the junk that is filled out life and make it place that has room for Jesus to take over.

Just like John called the people of his day to prepare their lives for the coming of the Messiah, we ought to be preparing our lives and convincing others to prepare His coming. I want to you to see this warning. This prophecy does not say that the Messiah will come when we are prepared. No, no. Whether we are or have been preparing He is coming. That's urgency. There's an urgency to be prepared, even now.

One of the primary doctrines of the church is that Jesus died for our sins, rose again from the grave, and is coming again. The Church always looks forward to the second coming of Christ. The Church always prays, 'Lord come'. We do not simply think of a Lord who came two thousand years ago or a Lord who will come at the end of history. We await a Lord who comes continuously into his world, among his people.

*"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."
(1 Corinthians 16:22)*

Transitional:

This morning, let's see the formula that John preached to point people to the Messiah.

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First, John preached the imminent coming of Jesus.

Second, John preached the necessity for repentance.

*But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;
(Matthew 3:7-8)*

John pleads with his audience to produce fruit that is evidence of a repentant life. Well, what does that mean? It means to demonstrate the true change in your heart and mind by the way that you live your life.

He also makes a remarkable statement that is extremely applicable to us today in the culture in which we live. John says...

*"and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham."
(Matthew 3:9)*

What he means is this: "Don't say that just because we're Jewish, because we're God's chosen people, everything will be ok." He's basically saying, "It doesn't matter who you know, what you own, how much you've given to the church, what church you belong to, or how good you are, that's not enough." There is only one thing that assures that one is a genuine follower of Jesus. It is that they have repented and have evidence of a changed life.

Just because we were baptized, or grew up in Sunday School, or walked the aisle at some point, or even repeated a prayer with a preacher, that doesn't mean we are truly devoted to Jesus Christ. It is all about, as John says, "Produce fruit consistent with repentance."

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Third, John preached the necessity of death and a new life.

I want you to see this passage in Matthew 6.

*“And they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.”
(Matthew 3:6)*

They were not baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. They were baptized because they were confessing their sins and they were seeking repentance. The baptism was done as evidence of their old life dying and their new life being raised new.

John tells us four wonderful things about Jesus in his preaching.

1. Jesus is more powerful than we will ever be.
2. Jesus is more worthy than we can ever become.
3. Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit.
4. Jesus will baptize with fire.

Finally, John also says Jesus will baptize with fire. I believe John is referencing here Jesus' work when He will return back to the earth. Most often, when we hear of fire in the Scriptures it speaks of judgment. When Jesus returns to the earth He will come to bring judgment.

How to prepare for the Coming of the King?

1. Make sure you've been forgiven.
2. Produce fruit from the forgiven life.
3. Live as if today was your last day here.