Repentance Luke 3:1-6 Dec 8, 2024

“***A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. .… and all mankind will see God’s salvation.***’”

* **Choices** each day we all make choices – some good and some not so good.
* Last week we (all 3 of us) received an email from a dear friend who is well known internationally asking us to do him a favor concerning his niece who has stage 4 cancer. The favor involved purchasing some inexpensive thing online. Normally and without hesitation, we would do a favor for this friend, but something just didn’t smell right about the request. So we did some checking before acting. It turns out that our friend had his e-mail hacked, and because this person is so well known not only in Canada but internationally, many, many people would have received this scam email.
* Had we acted on this favor, the hacker would then have our credit card number.
* The lesson here is twofold:
* 1) We should weigh our choices carefully.

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* Beware of temptation.
* The temptation to act was real, and I’m sure some people got caught up in it.
* Sin can be like that – it usually involves a popular thing to do, or there is some perceived payback that makes it enticing.
* But sin can also be deadly because it can rob from us our eternal destiny.
* Today, is 2nd Sunday of Advent & we continue our journey both toward the birth of the Christ child and the return of Jesus with the calling, as was highlighted last week, ‘*Be prepared*’, ‘*Be ready*’.
* And as is traditional on the church calendar, the 2nd Sunday in Advent is when we hear from John the Baptist.
* This morning we read from the OT book of Malachi that was written in the 5th century BC, yet it is extremely accurate concerning John the B and his role as the forerunner to Jesus.
* “***See I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me.***” (Mal 3:1)
* John the Baptist is very important because he unlocks a key to our salvation.

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* There is one word that is synonymous with John the Baptist? – ***repentance***
* Repentance, like sin, is such an unpopular

word that even the church doesn’t seem to want to talk about it much.

* The modern Anglican liturgy I believe is a reflection of that.
* In the BAS contemporary liturgy, we have these words for the invitation to confession: “***Dear friends in Christ, God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy; he welcomes sinners and invites them to his table. Let us confess our sins confident in God’s forgiveness***.”
* Seems to have left out altogether any sense of repentance whereas in the traditional liturgy in the BCP, we read: “***Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins*** ”
* Why in the world would the church not want to talk about repentance?
* Repentance does mean change, but change for the good.
* Repentance means first that we turn from our sin and that we are sorry that we offended God

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* In the Bible, St Paul calls this Godly sorrow
* ***“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”***(2 Cor 7:10)
* One reason sometimes given for omitting repentance is an understanding that Jesus simply accepts and loves everybody – **which He does**
* But He does not want you to remain in sin.
* Christian author Max Lucado writes “***Jesus loves you just the way you are, but he refuses to leave you that way***.”
* A passage that is commonly referenced to highlight Jesus’ acceptance of everyone is from John 8 where a woman caught in adultery is brought before Him by the Pharisees who reminded Jesus that the Law demanded that this woman be stoned.
* When Jesus said, “***If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her***.” (v7), the Pharisees, one by one all walked away until there was only the woman and Jesus left. Jesus then

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asked her: “***Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you***?”

* No one sir, she said.
* “***Then neither do I condemn you***,” Jesus declared.
* But he also said: “***Go now and leave you life of sin.***” (V-11)
* Or another way of saying the same thing would be, “***Go now and change your ways***” or “***Go now in repentance***.”
* Repentance is actually a V good thing because it is repentance that brings us to salvation.
* Repentance simply means being sorry and turning away from what we know is wrong.
* God cannot bless sin.
* Situation = God-holy/sin cannot co-exist in G’s presence.
* Yet, we also acknowledge that **we** are all sinners.
* How then can we stand in God’s presence?
* Sounds like a pretty desperate situation –

And **it is** if we look at it on our own.

* But God did not leave us in this desperate

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situation – He provided a way out for us by sending Jesus to be sin for us.

* Not only to forgive our sins, but to remove the very stain of that sin from our lives.
* John the Baptist’s words (actually taken from Isaiah 40:3-5) ***Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. And we will see God’s salvation.***
* There is only one way to prepare for Jesus and that is through repentance.
* The coming of John the Baptist and his call to repentance is so important & essential to the good news of Jesus Christ that Luke’s gospel nails down the timing of it all, not once as is usual in the Bible when a prophet is announced, not once, but six times as we just read in Luke’s gospel.
* Now we know that Luke was the details guy – the historian, and here he makes absolutely certain that there is no mistake about John the Baptist and when he was dated in history – that is how important John the Baptist’s call to repentance was and is.

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* John the Baptist had a very tough message, one that you would expect would ruffle a few feathers.
* But rather than scaring people away, just the opposite was happening.
* People came to him by the thousands.
* Remember also that they traveled out in the desert to him.
* Jewish people had the Law & they had the temple, which they considered sacred – yet they weren’t waiting in the temple for God to act – they left the temple & went to the desert.
* ***What was going on to stir these people up to such an extent?***
* To answer this I would like to look at several things about John the Baptist.
* John’s message was uncompromising
* For John, truth was more important than being nice.
* He did not pull punches.
* Told people to repent, to stop their nonsense, to show remorse for their actions & return to God.
* The most imp thing that contributed to John’s successful ministry was that his

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ministry was not about him.

* The only focus John had was on the one who was to follow Him.
* The One whose sandals he wasn’t worthy to stoop down & tie.
* John wasn’t interested in winning any popularity contest & therefore wasn’t the least bit concerned about what people thought about him.
* Only concern was being obedient in serving God so that people heard the truth & could be freed from their sins.
* John the Baptist called people to repentance, and while that wasn’t an easy task, and wasn’t a task that people necessarily liked to hear, he still had a very large number of followers & a tremendously successful ministry, Why?
* ***Because there was a spiritual hunger for meaning and purpose in people’s lives, and John was presenting the truth about seeking God & discovering that meaning & purpose.***
* Today is no different.
* There is still the same spiritual hunger
* We are still called to repentance,

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because it is only when we acknowledge

our sins and turn from them that it is possible to find God - where we find meaning & purpose

* It is God’s desire that each and every one of us be in relationship with Him & to be assured of eternal life with Him.
* Jn 3:16 – To believe in Jesus does not simply mean that we believe that he existed.
* Rather, it means that we believe that he died on the cross for our sins and we receive that gift of grace and we acknowledge Him as our Lord and Saviour.
* We sometimes make Christianity sound complicated, but it is really as simple as ABC.
1. **Admit** we are sinners & our need for salvation.
2. **Believe** that Jesus came to remove our sins.
3. **Commit ourselves to Jesus.**
* The very second we do that, we are not only forgiven, but we are assured the promise of eternal life.

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* Although we are sinners, we can stand in the presence of God, not in our righteousness, but through the righteousness of Jesus.
* No better way to prepare for Christmas – actually to prepare for life – than to cement our relationship with J.C.
* Last week we prayed the “sinner’s prayer and recommitted our lives to Jesus.
* We finished that prayer by asking God to fill us with His Holy Spirt so that wecould be **st**rengthened to walk in His holy ways.
* Billy Graham once said about being filled with the HS: “***I get filled, but I leak”***, and therefore have to be filled over.
* Our commitment to Jesus is a bit like that.
* We need to repeatedly remind ourselves that indeed **He is our Lord & Savior**.
* Because it is Advent & a time to prepare, we need to embrace John the Baptist’s call to repentance, not in our own strength, but in the strength that comes from being filled with the HS.

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Let us pray

**Come HS come! Come and fill each one of us to overflowing so that we may turn from all that is displeasing to God. Help us to prepare ourselves so that we may know the joy that can only come from being in Your presence.**