

# preparing to meet jesus

Luke 3.1-14.

## thought for the week

Jesus was clear that among those born of woman there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John (Luke 7.28). The message of John the Baptist was in part the same as Jesus, that the Kingdom of heaven was near, but his calling was significantly different.

John's calling was to be a messenger to point the way to Jesus. For Jews, it was commonplace to wash themselves before meeting with God in the Temple, Now, John the Baptist calls people to prepare themselves through washing to meet God in Jesus.

Today we too are messengers of God sent out, not with our own message, but rather one that has been given to us, namely that God's Kingdom is still near and accessible in Jesus. Our message is that Jesus is looking to lead us in life as our Lord and when we change our hearts towards Him, He graciously takes up his rightful place in our lives. We are, like John the Baptist, sent with a similar message calling for repentance and a new life empowered by the Spirit of Jesus.

## verse for the week

*The word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.*

Luke 3 verse 2

## image for the week



## prayer for the week

*Holy Father, who at the baptism of your beloved Son, revealed his glory, grant us a glimpse of that glory in our lives, that we may be ever immersed in your presence Father, with the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

**Amen**

David Adam

# reflection for each day

## day one

*A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him'.*

Today we find ourselves on a journey that can resemble a wilderness in the sense that our surrounding culture does not always reflect God's priorities. But even in the wilderness we still help to prepare the way for the Lord and expect him to walk in the paths that we prepare.

## day two

*You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?*

John is saying that they are born of snakes and not of Abraham - they are in a dire situation and only radical action will suffice. Reflect on the good news that radical action has come in the gift of God in Jesus.

## day three

*Produce fruit in keeping with repentance*

The crowds are pictured as like the wilderness - unfruitful. John speaks of fruitful lives as we cross from the wilderness into the land flowing with milk and honey. But it will require our will and effort. How does this relate to your situation?

## day four

*do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'*

Our living relationship with Jesus is the key to our life - let us give thanks for Jesus and his life every day.

## day five

*every tree that does not produce fruit will be cut down*

We are meant to display the fruit of our faith. How can we produce fruit that displays the image of a loving God?

## day six

*Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.*

Reflect on how, like in the parable of the Good Samaritan, we may lead lives that are just and neighbourly, in Jesus name?

## day seven

*anyone who has food should do the same*

As we pray to God "give us today the bread of tomorrow" let us too share the bread of tomorrow as, in words and witness, we live today in the light of the coming Kingdom.

## for the group

### as you gather...

- What has particularly struck you about the messages of John the Baptist.
- We are the sent people of God just like Jesus and John. What does that feel like for you?
- Reflect on the fruit that you have produced this week
- As we reflect on the past week what do we think the Spirit may be saying to us?

### prayer for the group

*Lord, give us a lifestyle of repentance,  
confession and “sent-ness” that we may be  
united to you in the freedom and power you  
give so freely to those who ask.  
Help us to seek you with an undivided mind.*



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# the baptism of jesus

Luke 3: 15- 22

## thought for the week

With the arrival of John the Baptist we see the start of the new beginning. John, knowing that he is not the fulfilment of the messianic prophecies, begins to speak of who and what is to come.

John identifies himself with the role of preparing the way of the Lord as spoken by Isaiah and Malachi many years before. There are also words of judgement that, characteristically, prophets like John speak of, but also words of hope.

John announces the baptism of Spirit and fire of hope and judgement. The hope is stirred in the words of John that echo of Isaiah 44:3-5 that God will pour out his Spirit on the descendants of Jacob in quickening and life giving power. John also speaks of the baptism of fire and, from the context, this seems to clearly refer to end time judgment.

So within the message of John, rather like Jesus, there is much hope but also judgment so John prepares the way of the Lord.

## verse for the week

*And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.*

Luke 3 verse 18

## prayer for the week

*May the God of hope fill you up with joy, fill you up with peace, so that your believing lives, filled with the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with hope!*

## image for the week



# reflection for each day

## day one

*'I baptize you with water'*

We are baptised in water as a mark of cleansing and new life. Reflect on areas of your life where Jesus is leading you to cleansing and new life.

## day two

*'But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie'.*

John the Baptist was a great man of God and as a great man knew humility before Jesus.

## day three

*'He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit'.*

Our following of Jesus will naturally lead to empowered lives immersed in the Kingdom of God.

## day four

*'His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn'*

There will be a day when all things are reconciled and Jesus will gather together all people that have put their trust in him and followed.

## day five

*But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done*

Like John are we willing to confront that which is in opposition to God's ways in the lives of those we are drawn to?

## day six

*And as he was praying, heaven was opened*

Heaven and earth are close - where do you see a glimpse of heaven on the earth today as the future of our heavenly life manifests itself in our everyday life?

## day seven

*And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'*

God loves all people. However, for those of us baptised into following Jesus, these words are spoken over us too - before we engage any work! Can you hear these words spoken over your life? Let them sink in deeply and cleanse you of fear as soap cleans the deep fibres of clothing.

## for the group

### as you gather...

- Share the particular insights which have struck you this week
- Reflect further on God speaking the same words over you as he spoke over Jesus - “you are my Son whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”
- Do you have an experience of the meeting of heaven and earth?
- What does all this mean for our own discipleship?

### prayer for the group

*Lord, give us a lifestyle of repentance,  
confession and washing by your word that  
we may be united to you in the freedom and  
power you give so freely to those who ask.  
Help us to seek you with an undivided mind.*



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# the temptation of jesus

Luke 4. 1-13

## thought for the week

Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the Wilderness immediately after his baptism and it was there that he was tempted by Satan. If Jesus was led by the Spirit into a wilderness terrain, then the same may well happen to us. Jesus, unlike Adam, came through the temptations without yielding. Since Jesus has passed this way then so can we as we walk similar paths. We can do this as Jesus our guide and strength is with us by His Spirit.

## verse for the week

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness*

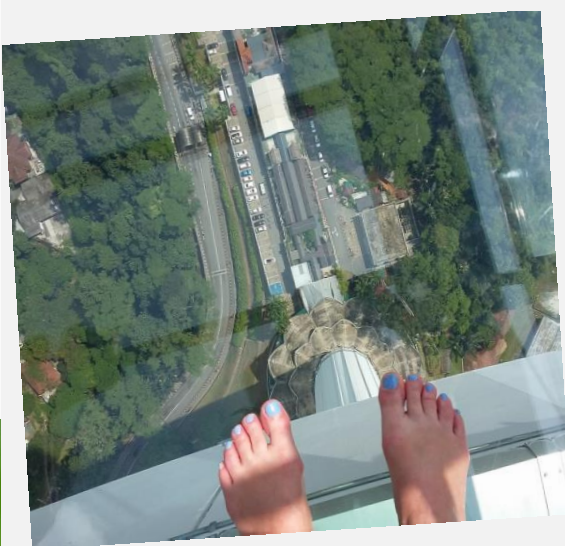
Luke 4 verse 1

## prayer for the week

*Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil*

Jesus

## image for the week



# reflection for each day

## day one

*'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.'*

Satan may tempt us to exercise our appetites! With Jesus' help we can master those appetites.

## day two

*Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone*

Like Jesus our food is to live as a response to God's word.

## day five

*Jesus answered, it is written: "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only."*

As Jesus responded to this temptation, so may we, like him respond 'Your Kingdom (and only your kingdom) come.'

## day three

*'I will give you all their authority and splendour; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.'*

Satan has the authority that was given to humankind in Genesis 1:26. Through Jesus we are once again given the authority to rightfully steward the earth and all its resources.

## day six

*The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here*

The last temptation in the trilogy was to seek God's approval by a spectacular rescue from a leap into an otherwise certain death. The message from scripture is the assurance that God's love ought not to be tested or doubted.

## day four

*'If you worship me, it will all be yours'*

Satan may tempt us with ambition to be somebody elevated beyond the calling God has given us. Let us be careful.

## day seven

*'When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him'*

As with Job and Jesus when the Devil is resisted he will leave.



## for the group

### as you gather...

- Share the particular insights which have struck you this week
- Do you recognise the temptations of appetite, affirmation and approval?
- How can we resist the Devil?
- Reflect on your experience of being led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness.

### prayer for the group

*Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,  
My memory, my understanding,  
and my entire will.  
All I have and call my own.  
You have given all to me.  
To you, Lord, I return it.  
Everything is yours; do with it what you will.  
Give me only your love and your grace.  
That is enough for me. AMEN*

St. Ignatius of Loyola



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## the manifesto of jesus

Luke 4.13-30

## thought for the week

The ministry begins. Jesus, having come through the temptations in the desert now returns in the power of the Holy Spirit whilst the direction of his calling unfolds and is revealed in the synagogue. The apportioned reading for that day captures Jesus mission. The Messiah that Israel had hoped would lead them into the freedom of the Rule of God – the anointed King who would declare a time of forgiveness (the Jubilee), just turns up in Church one day!

Jesus was not well received by some in his home town but went on to demonstrate that his words lead to actions that are in tune with those very prophecies he quoted from Isaiah. God's Kingdom was indeed close in the person of Jesus and all the signs of healing, deliverance and the driving back of evil signified this.

But first came the recovery of sight to the blind. Jesus declares himself later to be the Light of the World. If we want to see what our surroundings and life really looks like, then we need to see those things through the light that Jesus casts upon them. From that knowledge comes the new vision that gives us true freedom as God intended it.

## verse for the week

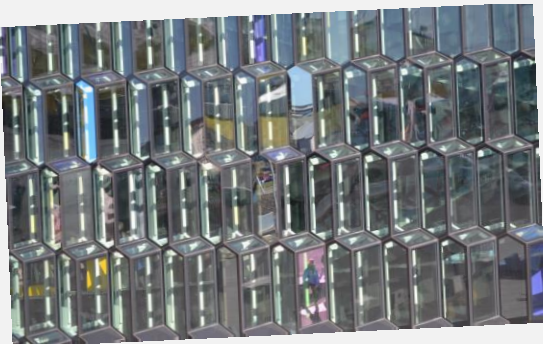
*All spoke well of him and were  
amazed at the gracious words that  
came from his lips  
Luke 4 verse 22*

## prayer for the week

*Love bade me welcome;  
Yet my soul drew back,  
Guilty of dust and sin.  
But quick-eyed Love,  
Observing me grow slack  
From my entrance in,  
Drew nearer to me, sweet questioning  
If I lack'd anything*

George Herbert

## image for the week



# reflection for each day

## day one

*Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit*

Ask for the power of God's Spirit in your life today.

## day two

*'He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoner, recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'*

Reflect on how these elements of freedom have impacted on your life over the last year.

## day three

*Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.*

Jesus clearly had a sense of fulfilling this particular passage of scripture. Which of Jesus sayings resonate with you in terms of being fulfilled by you?

## day four

*no prophet is accepted in his hometown*

Our following of Jesus may lead to some rejection by those who know us best. Pray for such people today.

## day five

*Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon*

Like Elijah and Jesus, we are sent people - pray for guidance - who is God sending you to?

## day six

*They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill'*

Reflect on the areas of your life where Jesus may have been driven to the edge. Ask him to take his rightful place in the centre of those areas.

## day seven

*But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way*

As on the Emmaus Road Jesus is often "on the move". He calls us to follow him. Just check out that you also are on the "same move" as Jesus. Maybe you have rested with Jesus and now He is back on the move - check these things out in prayer.



## for the group

### as you gather...

- Share the particular insights of your journey with Jesus that have struck you this week.
- Reflect further on Jesus words 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'.
- How do you deal with the painful issues of rejection through your following of Jesus?
- How have this week's reflections impacted on your discipleship

### prayer for the group

*Lord, as we are empowered by your Spirit  
give us ears to hear and hearts to follow  
where you would send us.*

*We pray for all the provision that we need to  
accomplish this particular task in your  
Kingdom at this time.*



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Apprentice