

Preparing for Advent

Luke 3: 1-14

Preparing for Advent

- Advent – coming; arrival of someone important
- By 6th century, Christians linked it to the second coming of Jesus Christ
- Not until Middle Ages was Advent season linked to the birth of Jesus Christ

- Which advent or coming are we preparing for?
- How do we prepare for it?

The year 2001 ...

- George W. Bush
- Jean Chretien
- Pope John Paul II
- Premier of BC?
 - Ujjal Dosanjh (until June 5) then Gordon Campbell

The year 2001 ...

- April 1, 2001?
 - beginning of longest transit strike in Metro Vancouver (123 days!)
- Sept. 11, 2001?
- July 27-29, 2001 at the Firs, Bellingham, WA?

The beginning of John the Baptist's ministry

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

(Lk. 3: 1-3)

John's ministry

- For 400 years, God had been silent
- John the Baptist's assignment: to prepare the people for the Messiah's arrival
- Called people to repentance
- Pointed them to the Messiah
- Guided those who repented into a new attitude of life

Repentance

“He will bring back (or turn) many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

(Luke 1: 16-17)

Repentance ...

- opens our minds, softens our hearts, and turns our life in the direction of God
- The work of the Holy Spirit (see Ezekiel 32: 26)
- “Repentance is turning away from any and all reliance upon what I am by birth (like Jewish or Gentile) or what I have done by my own effort, and turning to the absolutely free mercy of God for the hope of salvation.” – John Piper
- Turning away from sin; turning toward God for salvation

Repentance leading to the forgiveness of sins

“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, ...”

(Luke 1: 76-77)

- Turning away from what we are by birth, or achieve by effort, to relying completely on God's mercy and grace to save us from our sin

Did John preach that sins were forgiven by baptism?

- No. John's baptism did not bring about salvation any more than the OT sacrifices did
- Merely pointing to sacrifice of Messiah on the cross for the people's sins
- Baptism illustrated what was happening in their hearts – willingness to repent of their sins and getting ready for Messiah who would bring them forgiveness

John's baptism: offensive to the Jews

- symbolic rite that a non-Jew had to go through to become Jewish
- “You can’t rely on your Jewishness for salvation; need to be changed in your heart toward God.”

John's message

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." (Luke 3: 7-9)

John's message was for all people

He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,

‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.

Every valley shall be filled in,

every mountain and hill made low.

The crooked roads shall become straight,
the rough ways smooth.

And all people will see God's salvation.” (Lk. 3: 3-6)

How do we prepare for advent?

- Repentance leading to the forgiveness of sins
- Turn away from sin; turn towards God
- **Difference:** Jesus Christ has already died for our sins on the cross
- Without faith in Christ, not true repentance, only sorrow

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

(1 John 1: 8-9)

Advent points us to Christ

- not only in the manger
 - but on the cross ...
 - His resurrection
 - His ascension
 - His second coming
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- This Advent season, don't focus merely on the manger, but on all the events of Christ's life on our behalf

Repentance: not just words, not just feeling sorry, but a complete change of attitude

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Repentance and faith – a life of obedience to God's commandments

- Baptism does not guarantee salvation
- Becoming a member of a church does not guarantee salvation
- Repentance and faith are to be followed by a life of obedience to God's commandments
- Only possible through the Holy Spirit working in us

“What should we do?”

“What should we do then?” the crowd asked.

John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.”

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?”

“Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.

Then 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.” (Lk. 3: 10-14)

“What should we do?”

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

(Lk. 3: 18)

- Luke views John's message as “good news” or the gospel, even with its warning of judgment
- Unlike us, John did not know about Jesus' death on the cross
- But God had revealed enough to John about the salvation that's breaking into the world already

John's message:

- God's judgment is coming (vv. 7-9)
- Repentance in faith means treating others well (vv. 10-14)

To the crowds

- Be generous and share what you have with others

“If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry.” (Lk. 3: 11; NLT)

To the tax collectors

- Be honest in your job

“Collect no more taxes than the government requires.” (Lk. 3: 13; NLT)

To the soldiers

- Be honest in your job
- Don't take what's not yours and always tell the truth
- Be content with your job

“Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.” (Lk. 3: 13; ESV)

Why these 3 examples?

- Crowds
- Tax Collectors
- Soldiers

Why these 3 examples?

- 3 particular groups hostile to each other
- Crowds – ordinary people
- Tax Collectors – greedy traitors working for the Romans to line their own pockets
- Soldiers – represented Rome's brutal authority and power over them
- When we turn to God, all on level ground before cross of Jesus
- Reconciliation with God leads to reconciliation with others, even our enemies!

What do 3 answers have in common?

- “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.” (Lk. 3: 11)
- “Don’t collect any more than you are required to.” (Lk. 3; 13)
- “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.” (Lk. 3: 14b)
- **Their possessions:** things and money

Why ?

- Repentance and faith in God changes how we handle our money and our possessions
- Reliance on God's mercy and hope, and in His promises changes our attitudes towards money & possessions
- only possible through the work of the Holy Spirit

“I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” (Lk. 3: 16; NLT)

- That's all part of the good news!

- Can tell where my heart is resting by the way I handle my money and my possessions
- Am I resting on the mercy and promises of all-sufficient God?
- or resting on my abilities, resourcefulness and connections?
- “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Lk. 12: 34)

3 specific examples

- Crowds - share what you have with those in need
- Tax Collectors & Soldiers - don't use your "power" to exploit others
- Be content by humbly relying on God's mercy and grace

- Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13: 5)
- "... O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6: 8; NLT)

Preparing for Advent

- Repentance and faith
- Change of attitudes and actions (change in priorities and lifestyle)

“Fruit” of such repentance and faith

- Restored relationship with God and with others, even our enemies
- Humble reliance on God’s mercy and grace, leading to contentment
- Results in generosity and honest living
- Able to resist temptation to exploit others for material gain

