

Does Your Repentance Have Fruit?

Sunday, 12/9 – 8:00 & 10:45

Second Sunday in Advent – 2018

During Advent: Wednesday Services at 11 & 7; Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Today we focus on John the baptizer, repentance, and the fruit of repentance!

- The Precise Time When John Began His Ministry:** ¹ In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar [the Roman emperor from AD 14 to 37], Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea [from AD 26/27 to 36/37], and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee [from 4 BC to AD 39], and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis [from 4 BC to AD 33/34], and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. // The Bible is God's Word, so it is true historically – as we think about all the people I just named, and also true in every other way as well – especially regarding creation, sin, and forgiveness! So, at that precise time in history, God called John to begin his ministry; as God spoke to other OT prophets, so He spoke to John!
- John Proclaimed a Baptism of Repentance for Forgiveness:** ³ And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. // A true proclaiming of God's Word is simply to tell what God has said – no more and no less. So John did that near the Jordan River, which was an

unpopular location. God wanted to ✦draw the people away from their regular routines, ✦cause them to remember the wilderness wanderings under Moses, and ✦work repentance within them – *so that they could be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins!* What does that mean? God ➡made the people sorry and ➡gave them faith in the coming Messiah; *then they were given the gift of forgiveness through baptism!* Through our baptism into Christ, our sins are removed from us “as far as the east is from the west” (Psalm 103:12 ESV).

- a. These words prophecy the work of John: ⁴ **As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.** // Jesus, *only six months younger than John*, was coming; *His ministry would begin soon*. John called the people to prepare for Jesus’ coming, *and the Spirit was working through his preaching to work repentance!*
- b. These words describe God’s work of repentance as if it was road construction: ⁵ **Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level** *[smooth]* **ways,** ⁶ **and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”** // Wow, ✦every valley filled, ✦every mountain made low, ✦the crooked made straight, ✦the rough made smooth; since all are spiritually dead apart from Christ, *let us rejoice in God and His work to prepare us and save us!*

3. **John Called the People to Show Their Repentance:** Some people who came to be baptized confessed their sins; however, here, when the Pharisees and Sadducees came –

hoping to flee from God's wrath, they – like the others – asked to be baptized, **but they did not confess**. Like many today, they hoped to escape God's punishment by merely going through the process of being baptized. ⁷ [John] said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood [offspring] of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear [make, produce] fruits in keeping with [literally, worthy of] repentance. // No one is saved by going through certain motions; such people have ✦false repentance and ✦false hope. False repentance includes “a passing regret, a few tears... a [temporary] emotion, a few sighs, an excuse of two, a wish to be different, a resolve to change by one's own efforts, a brief outward betterment, and the like” (Lenski, 188). Yet John called for a true God-worked sorrow!

- a. These words describe their false hope: **And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.** // Some think they are saved because of their relationship with others, *but the only relationship that matters is with Jesus (John 17:3).*
- b. These words describe the urgency of their problem: ⁹ **Even now the axe is [being] laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore ~~that does not bearing~~ [making, producing] good fruit is [being] cut down and thrown into the fire.”** // In today's world, many SEEM to be in the middle – *not real close to God, but not horrible sinners either*. But that is not a true category: All people are either repentant – *thus forgiven in Christ*, or unrepentant – *thus in line for God's coming wrath*, unless they become open to the work of the Spirit through the Word.

4. **John Told the People How to Show Their Repentance:**

- a. **In general:** ¹⁰ **And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?”** ¹¹ **And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.”** // John said nothing extreme, he simply said to notice the needs of others; then share with them what you have been given.
- b. **Tax collectors – who were thought to have a sinful occupation:** ¹² **Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”** ¹³ **And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.”** // So they didn’t need to change jobs; John told them how to do their jobs in a God-pleasing way.
- c. **Soldiers – who often did wrong:** ¹⁴ **Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?”** **And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone [harass, intimidate] by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”** // John told them how to be soldiers in God-pleasing ways!

Let Us Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, TY for working true repentance in us, *thus sorrow for our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior!* Now, *going forward in our lives*, please keep working through the Word to **◆keep us sorry and ◆keep us trusting**; then, *in what we say and do*, may our God-worked repentance be a positive testimony to others!

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