

John Prepared the Way...



Whose Way
are You
Preparing?
How?

Saturday, 12/5 at 4:00 ✦ **Sunday, 12/6 at 9:00**

Second Sunday in Advent – 2020

Join us on Wednesdays in Advent: Service at 11 & 7

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ:

Try to imagine what was going on at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport this past Tuesday... Since planes needed to land, *the plowing crew was busy preparing the runway to successfully receive the planes.* In a similar way, almost 2,000 years ago, *John the Baptizer was busy preparing human hearts to successfully receive the Messiah!*

As we focus today on the beginning of **Mark chapter 1**, let's ➡ think about *God's work through John* and ➡ be open to *God's work through us!*

1. **Beginning of the Good News:** ¹ **The beginning of the gospel** [the good news] **of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.** // Let's focus on the term beginning:

- a. The **very** beginning: Before the fall into sin, *there was no need for the gospel*. However, *as soon as the people fell*, which brought immediate spiritual death and eventual physical death, *Good News was desperately needed!* So **the beginning of the beginning of the gospel** was on the day of the first sin, because, on that very day, *God FIRST PROMISED to send the Savior!*
- b. OT reminders: When we expect something to happen, yet it doesn't happen for a long time, *we are tempted to give up*. Therefore, the LORD gave *MANY REMINDERS throughout the OT* about the promise He made to send His Son.
- c. The beginning of the Messiah's arrival: Since John was sent to prepare the way for the Messiah, the coming of John certainly signaled *the beginning of THE ACTUAL COMING of the Messiah!*

2. **Prophecy about John's Work**: ² **As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "BEHOLD, I [God the Father] SEND MY MESSENGER [John the Baptizer] AHEAD OF YOU [my Son], WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; ³ [MY MESSENGER will be] THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.'" //** That statement was **♦breathed-out by God** and **♦written down by Isaiah** about 700 years before the birth of John. Then, **♦according to God's timing**, **♦John was sent**, **♦John cried out in the wilderness**, and **♦God used John's preaching to prepare the way for the promised Savior!**

3. **Main Message of John:** ⁴ **John the Baptist** [*Baptizer (Oh, how we wish he would have been a Lutheran 😊!)*] **appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.**
- a. The Bible literally says: John was “preaching a baptism of repentance into a **sending away of sins.**” Lenski wrote: “**The sins are taken from the sinner and are sent away so far and in such a way that even God will not find them on the day of judgment**” (31). The Bible has this **good news:** “As far as the east is from the west [*which is an infinite distance*], So far has He [*the LORD*] removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12 NAS). 😊
 - b. This was the process: ♣ John preached, ♣ the Holy Spirit made the people sorry for their sins, ♣ the people confessed their sins, and ♣ the people were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins!
4. **Response to John’s Message:** ⁵ **And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.**
- a. Why did they go out to John? **He was different –**
 - ☞ preaching in the wilderness, *rather than in the city;*
 - ☞ wearing rough clothing (camel’s hair), *rather than a priestly garment;*
 - ☞ eating unusual food (locust and honey), *rather than common food;*
 - ☞ telling the full truth of God, *rather than telling what was comfortable for people to hear;* and
 - ☞ offering God’s gift of forgiveness, *rather than worldly advice!*

b. Why will people come to us? **Because they know** – 😊 we practice what we preach (we do what we say); 😊 we care about them; 😊 we pray for them; 😊 we are kind to them; 😊 we are honest with them; 😊 we speak words that are relevant to them; and 😊 we want them to have God's forgiveness and peace!

5. **Humble Life of John:** ⁶ **John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.** // What do those things tell us about John? He focused on ♣God and ♣God's will for his life, *rather than his own comforts*. For us, *comforts are certainly nice*; however, as followers of Jesus, we are called to be like John – by *denying ourselves and doing God's will!*
6. **Pointing to Jesus:** ⁷ **And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. ⁸ I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."** // In the eyes of the people, *John was a great prophet of God*, but John DID NOT want the people focusing on Him! Therefore, John basically said, I am the lowest, ***Jesus is the highest***; don't focus on me, ***trust in Jesus, the Christ!***

Let Us Pray: Dear Father, thank You for the great example of John – *so obedient and such a blessing to countless people!* In our own small way, *help us to be like John to others!*

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