

A note from Kathy

The job of a forerunner is to go out in advance and inform everyone of the one who is coming. It is the job of the forerunner to take care of any details that need to be handled. This week we will study John the Baptist the forerunner of Jesus. Do not forget to pray and ask God to bless your time in his word.

Observation

1. In Matthew 3 we are introduced to John the Baptist, what is he doing in verse 1?
2. John the Baptist was called to prepare the way for Jesus. What did that mean?
3. The simplicity of John's food and dress tells us much about what he valued. How would you describe John in a few words?
4. What affect did John's preaching have on many of the people who heard him?
5. What was John's opinion of the Pharisees and the Sadducees? Why do you suppose he felt as he did about them? John was the son of a priest. Read Luke 1:5-6
6. John instructed the Pharisees and Sadducees to "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance." Fruit is the outward manifestation of what is true inside. What is John telling them they need to do?
7. According to verse 9 what were many of the Jews placing their trust in?
8. John wants them to understand and to come to salvation. Baptism is an outward sign to signify an inward change. What were the illustrations in verses 10 -12 that John uses to reveal the message of imminent judgment? God does not want anyone to waste the life they have been given. He desires to have a relationship with us.

9. Jesus comes to John while he is at the Jordan River to be baptized. How does John respond to Jesus request? Jesus always did the Father's will. Even though Jesus needed no forgiveness or change of heart what do you believe was God's purpose in Jesus baptism?
10. Turn your paper over and draw a picture that describes what happened in verses 16-17. Be sure to note ALL who were present.

Application

1. John the Baptist ministry was to "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him." How are believers today to prepare the way for others to see Jesus? Are there things we could do to enable our family, friends and others to see him?
2. God's words were a confirmation that Jesus ministry was about to begin with His blessing. We see the Trinity clearly in verses 16 and 17; Jesus is present, the Holy Spirit comes down and lights on him and the Father speaks. What more confirmation would someone need to repent and follow Jesus? What would hinder anyone after this?
3. It is a true statement that "No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care." It will often take our time, our talents and our treasure to help others. If we want them to know that God loves them then we must be willing to be the hands used to show them. We may not be able to change every difficult situation but we can alleviate some suffering and sadness along our way. What will that look like for you this week?
4. Are things any different today than it was when John the Baptist preached? When the gospel is shared what happens?
5. In what way are you sharing the gospel, the good news? The truth is many have still not heard. Or maybe they have heard the gospel shared by someone but they have never really seen someone with a changed heart and life. Why not be that person for them?
6. I recall when my assignment was being the mother of four. Some days it seemed so tedious and insignificant; some days I did it well but some days I missed the mark. Now

they are all grown I see the beautiful fruit of God's blessing on my labor. I was teaching by word and example the next generation; preparing their hearts to know him. What ministry has God given you? What part are you playing in preparing the way for others?

7. God does not waste time or resources or even experiences. God will use even our difficult experiences to equip us for his plan. How does knowing this help you as you go through a difficult situation?
8. Luke 12 says "To whom much is given much is required." The Pharisees had been given the scriptures and yet they missed the truth that was there for them. They were more concerned about appearing faultless than being right with God. We too have been given much; what are we doing with what God has given? Why not try this, make a list of all the ways God has blessed you and then ask Him to show you ways you could better serve Him. Be prepared, he will.
9. Do you have a greater understanding of the importance of John the Baptist ministry? The children of Israel were trusting in their heritage. They were descendants of Abraham to whom God had made some wonderful promises but they misunderstood God's plan and what it was that God required. John wanted them to see their need for repentance. Take some time today to really look at your own heart. Salvation is so simple but we must see our need for repentance. Whatever we place our trust in other than Jesus finished work on the cross will not save us.

Romans 10:9-10 ... if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

We must come to the place of surrender and acknowledge that Jesus is indeed Lord and Master. He came with a purpose, to pay for the sins of all mankind. His payment for our debt was accepted by God who raised him from the dead. Death could not hold him. This transferring of trust is a heart decision and by it we are made right (justified) with God. When we confess that this is our desire we are saved. **Romans 10:13** makes this very clear. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

If you need to talk further or you would like someone to pray with you, please email me.

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