

# The Messiah's Messenger

## Reading of the Word

### John: 1: 6-8

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.*

## Prayer

## Warm up

Good morning. My name is Eric Mattie I serve as one of the elders here at LEFC. I'm filling in this week for Pastor Dan as he and other leaders with in our church were able to go to the Pastor conference this week.

As we are in the book of John as a church- today- we will be spring boarding from this verse in John chapter 1 and primarily breaking down and talking about Luke 3 which of course features John The Baptist. So yes I am cheating a little bit, but hopefully by the end you'll forgive me and we will grow together. 😊

With that, let's take our Bibles and turn to Luke 3 :1-6 and we will dive into the message this morning.

When We normally hear of John the Baptist and our minds shut off. We head into neutral. That's the challenge this morning for you the listener. Yet that feeds in to my challenge because I don't want to give you just information to fill in your notes.

Rather I wish to expound on some truth that --- you in turn can chew on.

**The very purpose God had Luke pen his Gospel biography was so the generations which read it- you and I would know with certainty about what we hear.** God wasn't going to leave this good news to a convoluted game of telephone. Oral tradition has its place in teaching. But the Lord's written word had a specific function of reassurance in our believing, worshiping and loving God..

That is what I'm going for this morning- There are three reassurances through the work of God in John the Baptist life that I will point out to you. And I want to point them out to you, so that you will love, trust and worship God greater than you have in previous years in your walk with God. **My hope is that you will join me in resolving to love greater both God and man this year and to be wiser this side of your life over the previous years.**

The Title of today's sermon is : **The Messiah's Messenger**

Luke 3:1-6

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis,

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. 3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 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. 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 ways, 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

Introduction

Of course the Messiah’s Messenger ( or herald ) is John the Baptist- the cousin to Jesus.

In these 6 verses we see the Lord not only working through the words of John the Baptist but we see God working in the world at large.

Look with me at the 1<sup>st</sup> work

## **First Work: The Moment Was Prepared For**

### **Passage**

**“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas”**

*Luke 3:1, 2*

### **Picture**

As Luke writes on in Chapter 3 he accounts the historical surroundings of John’s ministry.

- He frames the action of God’s word coming to John the Baptist in light of a Roman World and religious climate that are in need spiritually of deep repentance and change.
- Tiberius, Pontius Pilate, Herod and Phillip and Lysanias –. They were in control and had the power to prove it. These were important leaders even the mention of the high priests Annas and Caiaphas important influential figures in society
- Yet God chose what is weak in the word to shame the strong.... He did not take the most important message to the most important people in the world’s context.

### **Point**

**The fact that they were in power when words of God came to John, shows me that The Moment was Prepared For**

### **Preach**

God didn't wait, nor did he providentially set up the world at that time to have righteous and virtuous leaders in positions of government.

Rather in God's continual involvement with all creation and governments He directed them to fulfill His purposes for such a time.

Now I ask you, Can we really and truly know what was in the mind of God through his decision to say: "alright now is the time- Create John the Baptist, Time to send the Son to Earth?"

**The answer of course is no.**

- We are not sure why there was some 400 years between prophetic words from God
- We could guess that God wanted to set up a disappointing world so that the feature and highlight of the Divine Messiah's coming would be a brighter ray of hope for the world- But that is only our guess trying to figure out the works and ways of God.

***But what we do know is.***

- Ephesians 1:11 Paul says that God "accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will." The word translated "accomplishes" indicates that God "works" or "brings about" all things according to his own will.

***What we do know is that God is sovereignly reigning over ever ruler.***

- We read in the Psalms, "His kingdom rules over all" (Ps. 103:19).
- Moreover, "he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What are you doing?" ' (Dan. 4:35)

***What we do know is that he allows them to reign.***

- "He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; (Dan 2:21)
- The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will. (Proverbs 21:1)

**Point**

The Bottom line is: **God prepared the moment.** He prepared it for reasons that **we will not fully know.** Yet we understand this... He did not prepare the moment for our comfort or political convictions or our contentment.

Rather when God prepared the moment for His own reasons He said it was time for His coming. He deemed it the perfect time in history to redeem mankind.

**Practical: First Reassurance /Certainty**

**When God is working in our lives-** and he does all the time- are we able to remain in the spot where **when we won't have the understanding of the reason and yet still rest and trust in Gods sovereignty?**

- Do you know where else we see this point about God preparing the moment? in the lives of Zechariah and Elizabeth John the Baptist parents! Think about it: Zechariah was old, his wife

barren and advanced in years. Struggling for years with these two issues in a society that looked at barrenness as a curse. Yet God prepared the moment even when they didn't understand.

Remember the Bible says "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and He will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5,6)

Let's look at the second work...Luke 3:2

## **Second Work: The Messenger Was Predicted**

### **Passage**

**the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. -Luke 3:2b**

### **Picture**

Just as the word of the Lord came to Abraham, Samuel, David, Elijah, Jeremiah and all the prophets, God's word came to John in the wilderness.

- Not in the temple and the high priest Caiaphas.
  - Not in the throne room of Rome to the Caesars
    - But in the wilderness - the dry rough terrain of the wilderness.

The passage goes on...

**3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness..."**

Luke 3:3,4

We will stop here

### **Point**

**God's second work here is that the Messenger Was Predicted.**

**Two figures stood at the close of the Old Testament prophecy...** Two predicted figures stood shadowing the prophecies of old. They stood ready in the hope-filled prophecies of a coming rescuer, the coming salvation. The two were The Messiah (rescuer and redeemer himself) and His Messenger.

From the time Isaiah uttered this prophecy (recorded Isa 40:3-5) to the time John the Baptist began his ministry was 700 years.

For 700 years the Lord knew he was going to bring John in existence to be the Messiah's messenger.

Doesn't this bring new light for your reading of Psalm 139:16 where it says:

“Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.”

- That phrase “as yet there was none of them”- ... there was 700 years of no days for John the Baptist.
- Yet **God Predicted the Messenger**. The voice in the Wilderness was prophesied. And now here he was...

For John the Baptist

Malachi predicts:

Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi 3:1)

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes (Malachi 4:5)

- **Matthew clearly point to John the Baptist as the fulfillment of Isaiah prophecy:**

In those days **John the Baptist** came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.” (Matthew 3:1-3)

- **Jesus himself confirms John was prophesied about:**

“*Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John . . . For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You’* (Matthew 11:7,10).

Jesus said, “*For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come*” (Matthew 11:13,14)

## **Preach**

The Lord was already working the long game. 700 years he knew what he was doing and where he was going. There was an understandable plan that personally involved the birth, upbringing and ministry of John The Baptist..

This is a great reassurance... Why? Because we worship and love and have a relationship with the One who hold the future in His hands.

## **Point**

**There’s another point to note: that the Messenger was not only predicted but so was his mission.**

Let’s remember what was said about John to his Dad Zechariah, at his conception Luke 1:13-16

But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. 16 **And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, 17 and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.**”

**Preach:**

**The heart of John's mission was the preparing the heart**

It was the preparing of the heart of people for the reception of the coming Christ. John the Baptist was to Prepare the people for who was coming and then Point Him out.

That was his life's message from his very conception- to turn many to the Lord their God. To make ready for the Lord a people prepared

**Acts 19;4 says:**

**John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus**

**So both before his birth and after his death, John the Baptist life mission and message was clearly defined for the very purpose God created him for.**

**There are two thought I have about this fact about John the Baptist's Mission and message**

First is a challenging thought:

- John's life message was about Christ coming therefore trust in him and live like you trust him
- Paul's life message was about Christ who came and was crucified.
- What message does our lips and lives say about Christ- if it all? Let's examine our hearts together.

Secondly a thought:

In our witnessing attempts, we at times need to ask God to prepare the heart of the people we talk to... we understand that need.

But at the same time we are to discuss the deeper matters of the bad news mixed with the hope which is why Scripture says to be ready to give an explanation of the hope you have. You have hope because you understand your hopelessness first. Help people understand the need to be rescued before you share the news on who is the Rescuer.

Pace the way you share truth with people and trust that God's at work in what you say..

Now here is the second reassurance about God's work here

**Practical: Second Reassurance/ Certainty**

When we have the moments when we are throwing the biggest pity party. All alone and allowing a depressing darkness to cover our soul. Complaining about our lives and trials and troubles.

- It is good to remember that we have been Planned= created on purpose by a Creator. No accidents, opps or mistakes.
- It is good to remember “that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)
- It is good to remember the Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2) and he know the days ahead. Cast your hopes and cares on the eternal God who sees the long game of your life

Let's look at the third work and reassurance:

### **Third work: The Message Was Proclaimed**

Now there is a reassurance and certainty here but before we get to that...I wish to breakdown for a few minutes the Message that was being proclaimed.

- Matthew, Mark and Luke emphasis the Baptist preaching of a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin.
- John emphasizes a basic faith in Christ
- Yet it is here in Luke that Scripture summarizes all of the preaching and doctrine of John- it's the good news ... the Gospel

**Luke 3:18 So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.**

There are 4 threads of teaching that summarize John the Baptists' message:

**1st Thread: Prepare your hearts** verse 4

**‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 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 ways, 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”**

#### **Picture**

The literal picture in this quote describes the physical work preparing the roads to make them fit for a king to travel over when he arrives. Of course we understand that figuratively this verse speaks of the whole creation preparing for the arrival of a major figure, so all obstacles to his approach are removed.

John was the “advance man” for Christ, urging the people to get ready for the Messiah. In fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3-4, he called for the removal of spiritual obstacles (Luke 3:10-14).

- Mountains of pride, false humility, arrogance and abuse must be leveled.

- Valleys of human need must be filled.
- Crooked, deceitful sly and perverse behaviors with immoral paths must be straightened.
- Rough places of indifference, unconcern and hard heartedness must be made smooth and make way for genuine interest.

These things do not save us, yet in honest prayerful evaluation of our hearts condition to God's word will show us the desperate need we have for a Rescuer Savior

**That is the The way of the Lord is to be prepared... in your hearts,**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Thread: Purging is coming.** Verse 7

**He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?... Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Luke 3:7, 9**

**His [Jesus] winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Luke 3:17**

There are two pictures here both representing one concept

**Picture** The word picture of fire throughout Scripture often symbolizes wrath.

- vs 9 says the trees that do not bear good fruit are cut down and thrown in to the fire.
- the same word picture of the chaff being burned up after the threshing for grain has happened.

**Picture** The picture of the axe lining up at the root of the tree means that judgement is at hand

**Point:** Here is what the concept and symbolism means : unrepentant people are lined up to be judged by the justified wrath of God.

Judgement is imminent for everyone. And that is the purging of wickedness that will happen in the final judgment. Where an eternal conscious torment in hell awaits the unrepentant.

**Preach:**

We are not to grow cold harded to that part of the message of the gospel just because there has been centuries that have passed- even millenniums that have passed. The final judgement and hell has been warned of.

The Gospel is an arrow which can pierce the hardest heart and heal the deadliest wound. The person you are witnessing to may need to hear this part of the good news.

Those who face death have the final judgement coming into their lives. Let's all of us examine our hearts and lives

**That is the work of purging that is coming.**



**3<sup>rd</sup> Thread: Produce fruits of repentance** verse 8:

**Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. 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**

**And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."**

**Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do."**

**Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."**

**Luke 3:8; 10-14**

**Point:**

What John is saying here is actually a warning. He is warning the Jews themselves that claiming Abraham as father will not deliver them from the coming wrath. Instead he instructs them to bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

**Preach**

Realize the fruit was not the baptism. Remember that John's baptism did not have the same meaning as we see baptism today. John's baptism represented for its pre-cross Israelite audience a commitment to a new approach to God resulting in a life of fruitfulness for God and expectation of the coming Messiah. So let it be clear- this is not a proof text saying that baptism saves anyone.

Baptism was a symbol of a change of heart in the minds of people toward God back then.

Today it is a symbolic portrayal and testimony on the **outside** of a spiritual change and working of God on the **inside** that has resulted in true faith that saves.

And the repentant change of mind and heart that John is urging all who hear him is to not trust in the heritage or spiritual up bringing to save you. Rather he tells them trust in the One to come to be your Rescuer,. And **out of that trust** prepare your hearts, confess your sin, forsake it and bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

Do you hear the good news in that? Do you hear the gospel? The only difference today is that we say the One who has already come.

**Practical:**

Does God's grace in your life, lead you to work out your salvation through a lifestyle of repentance? I've asked it this way in the past... Is God's grace in your life making you gracious? Has the divine work of God in your life empowered your soul and spirit to truly turn to Christ love him greater and therefore bear fruit of repentance in the way you act?

The three examples given to the crowd at hand begs the question: is your fruit bearing generosity, fairness thoughtfulness and contentment?

There must be an inward change which expresses itself outwardly in God glorifying conduct- fruit bearing that is in keeping with repentance.

That is the fruit of repentance we are to produce in our lives that display your faith in the One to come.

**4<sup>th</sup> thread: Powerful is the One to coming** v. 15

As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. John 3:15,16

**Point**

John the Baptist clearly contrasts what he is doing to what the mightier One, Jesus will be doing in this passage. He tells the crowd that the qualitative difference between himself and the One who is mightier than him is so great, that John is unworthy to untie and remove the shoes of Jesus.

**Preach:**

The Messiah is Mightier than the Messenger in so many ways

- **The Messenger baptized with water    The Messiah Baptized by the Spirit.**
- **The Messenger's baptism was figurative. The Messiah's baptism is a Full life giving fire of grace**
- **The Messenger cried Repent!    The Messiah created the ability to Repent**
- **The Messenger proclaimed Forgiveness of sin.    The Messiah procured the forgiveness of sin with his life.**

**Bringing the threads together of John the Baptist message it says this:**

- The way of the Lord is to be **prepared**... in your hearts, Because a work of **purifying and purging**... is coming.
- Therefore you are to have fruit of repentance **produced**... in your lives by faith in the One to come and who we are to put our trust in since He is more **powerful**... than our heritage and our lifeless good works.

I hope this break down helps in your reading of this passage and that we understand the message of John The Baptist was the good news message of Jesus Christ.

Let's turn back to the third work of God that was happening in John the Baptist life...

**The work God was doing here is that the Message was being Proclaimed.**

**Preach**

This is God's message not John's. It is a word that came from God to John in the desert. It is not the message of an orator who can bend the ears of his listeners. Rather it is the life giving words of God that cut and divide soul and spirit.

**God was proclaiming the Message** through John that salvation for all mankind- not just Israel was to be seen.

It was to be seen not in a lecture of truth.                      Nor a teaching of philosophy                      Or a speech of inspiration.                      No.

Salvation was to be seen by all flesh through the coming ***person*** and work of Jesus Christ. And John does just that- He points out The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

### **Practical: Third Reassurance/ Certainty**

We can rest assured and stand in certainty of what we believe because salvation is not found in our goodness or right living.. It is found in Jesus Christ- as he is our substitute to pay the debt we could never pay and to be the righteousness we can never perfectly achieve. The certainty of Christ coming, His calling and commission are what we are to respond to in FAITH.- Forsaking All I Trust Him

Have you placed your trust in Jesus Christ to save? To make you more like Him and to enjoy and love him forever. If not-- this is your day, respond by confessing and turning from sin and trusting and turning to the Rescuer of mankind- Jesus Christ.

Let's pray.

Thank you for showing us this morning how much bigger you are than our minds can handle. That we love and serve and worship a God that we don't create, but who instead created us. Thank you that you didn't just set our lives on autopilot but that you are working to prepare moments, finishing your work in our life for our good and your glory. May we rest in your work for our salvation and rather enjoy the relationship with you that provide through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ -Amen