

NEXT STEP: STUDY & SHARE

READINGS

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

Righteousness shall prepare a pathway for God. (v13)

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior & Lord, who lives & reigns with you & the Holy Spirit, one God, now & forever. Amen.

SERMON TEXT- Mark 1:1-8

¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; ³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight;” ⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside & all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, & were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, & he ate locusts & wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down & untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

LISTENING TO . . .

GOD- *Christian life is rooted in the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit*

1. Compare & contrast the other accounts of St. John the Baptist’s ministry. How do the similarities & differences give you greater insight into John’s work? *See Matthew 3:1-12; Luke 3:1-17; John 1:19-34*
2. What “reward” does St. John receive for all his work? How does even this prepare the way for Jesus? For Jesus’ disciples? *See Matthew 4:12, 11:2-13, 14:1-12; Mark 1:14, 6:14-29; Luke 7:24-30, 9:7-9; Mark 14:34-62, 15:12-14; Acts 4:1-4, 7:51--8:4; 12:1-5*

EACH OTHER- *Sharing & growing with our brothers & sisters in Christ*

3. Review *Mark 2:17, Luke 15:7, Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 1:8-9*. What’s the point of repentance? To embarrass you before God, who already knows everything about you (*cf. Psalms 94:11, 139:2, 23; Matthew 10:30*)? Look up repentance in your study Bible & read the Augsburg Confession XII. Where does the old joke, “I know I’m going the wrong way, but I’m making great time!” apply to your life? AC available <bookofconcord.org>
4. “The things that I used to do, Lord, I won’t do no more” goes the old blues song. Think about the context of those things in need of repentance. How does the setting, the people, the time, the location, the habits, the smells, the food & drink, the music & sounds, & so forth buffer against repentance (that is, they work together to promote homeostasis or equilibrium)? How does repentance often end up with an entire “change of scenery” & not just a change of one action?

NEIGHBORS- *Bearing fruit for those not yet our brothers & sisters*

5. Consider “But for the grace of God, go I” & “Lord, I thank thee that I am not like these others.” Which shows the spirit & humility of repentance? How can you tell someone that repentance isn’t thinking you’re too good to do something, but rather you’re all too aware of your own frailty & failings? *See Proverbs 3:7, 26:12; Romans 12:1-3; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Galatians 6:3; Philippians 2:3-8*
6. Read *Revelation 18:1-8*, esp. v4. Compare it to the call of Abraham (*Genesis 12:1-5*) & the *Gospel* reading. How is God’s call out & away from familiar complacency & hard-heartedness about “that’s just the way it is; I can’t help it or myself” to a new life without such things in a “better country”? In other words, from disobedience to obedience. How can you help someone who is hesitant about leaving the old ways see that new country, just over the horizon? *See Genesis 4:6-7; Hebrews 11:8-17; 1 Peter 1:17-23, 5:6-9*

Out of Towners

Repentance gives our finite lives infinite significance. It will push & pull us from the mainstream to the margins, from Babylon to the wilderness

-Notes-

KEY VERSE: The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’ ”

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness,
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (v3-4)

-NEXT STEPS MEMORY VERSE-

Prepare the way of the Lord.

All flesh shall see the salvation of God. (Luke 3:4, 6)

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