

Laying The Axe To The Root

Matthew 3:1-12 NIV - ***John the Baptist Prepares the Way***

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea² and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” ³This is he who was spoken of through ***the prophet Isaiah: (Isaiah 40:3)***

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

⁴John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize you with (Or In) water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with (Or In) the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

- ***They wasn’t aware*** that they were standing in ***The Doorway of Prophecy!***
- The Root and offspring of David was near... ***the Messiah!***
- ***God always*** sends a preacher to stir the pot: and announce what’s happening!

There are 3 kinds of people:

- Those that ***Make things happen***
- Those that ***Watch things happen***
- Those that ***Wonder what happened.....***

NOW THERE IS NO DOUBT **JOHN WAS ONE THAT MADE THINGS HAPPEN!**

HIS MESSAGE WAS SIMPLE: Repent, the Kingdom is at hand! --(**the church**)

Repent, Because **God is ready to do a new thing!**

WE SHOULD BE HONORED TO BE PREACHED TO: God is sharing his plan and wants us to participate!!!

John 15:15 - ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father **I have made known to you.**

I Corinthians 1:21 - ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased **through the foolishness of what was preached** to save those who believe.

FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING ---- NOT FOOLISH PREACHING

- The absurdity, the simplicity of it...

Many Jews considered the **GOOD NEWS** of Jesus Christ **to be foolish...**

- They thought **the Messiah** would be a conquering king w/signs & miracles...
- **Jesus** had not restored David's throne as they expected...
- Besides, He was executed as a criminal...**HOW could a criminal be a Savior...**

Greeks, too, considered **the gospel foolish:**

- They **did not believe** in a bodily resurrection
- They thought **no reputable** person would be crucified
- To them, **death was defeat**, not victory...

The Good News of Jesus still sounds foolish to many...

- **Our society worships** power, influence, and wealth....
- **Jesus came as a humble, poor servant...**
- **HE offers His kingdom to those who HAVE FAITH....**

It's absurd to take an imperfect human to preach a perfect Gospel to an imperfect world!

NEVERTHELESS - ***Christ Crucified Is God's Power and Wisdom***

1 Corinthians 1:18 - For ***the message of the cross*** is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved ***it is the power of God.***

Like John's day... so it is with ours: ***"WE TRY TO DISCREDIT PREACHING"***

Matthew 3:4 - John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.

WE PAINT HIM AS SOME WILD EYED, UNEDUCATED, HICK, JACK LEG LUNATIC!

- Camel's Hair (type of clothing)
- Leather Mantle
- Locust = (some say a tree) Nevertheless, people ate locust (protein)

***SYMBOLIC:** Locust was type of judgment & Honey was a type of Canaan

JUDGMENT IS OVER... GRACE IS ON ITS WAY!

***POINT:** John was not some wild eyed nut!

- He was an articulate prophet of God filled with ***the Holy Ghost*** from his mother's womb who ***shook his world and prepared it for Jesus Christ!***

MULTITUDES WERE MOVED AT HIS PREACHING... AND WERE BAPTIZED! (*still works*)

He challenged the Religious Order:

Matt. 3:8-9 – Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

John the Baptist called people to more than words or ritual.

He told them to change their behavior –

- produce fruit in *keeping with repentance...*
- *Do your actions match your word????*

Matt. 3:10 - ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

- Each tree has to have fruit - *Let's see some repentance*

***JOHN'S MESSAGE: The axe must be laid to the root! REPENTANCE!**

****** The ROOT is where things spring from ******

Luke 6:45 - A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ----

Our Root is our Heart!

Romans 11:16 - If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

***P O I N T:** REPENTANCE IS NOT PRUNING! (Clipping outer edges for looks)

REPENTANCE IS LAYING AN AXE TO THE ROOT OF THE ROOT!

- Some folks are only spiritually mowing the lawn ---
- Never getting to the bottom line of the problem! ---
- REPENTANCE IS = "WEED BE GONE!"
- GET RID OF YOUR SINFUL ACTIONS - "cut it out" "stop it"

James 1:12-15 - ¹² Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

¹³ When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

OUR SIN PROBLEM CAN BE WASHED AWAY IN ONE SERVICE!

- Our fascination with sin **isn't...**

WE ARE DRAWN **BY OUR OWN LUST** (strong desire) -- **when acted upon is sin!**

***OUR PROBLEM:** we use our past to justify our desires!

We constantly wish to analyze our parents etc... to explain our desires

BUT THE BIBLE DOES NOT DEAL WITH US SO:

- Pronounces us Sinners and says **Get on with it!**
- **LOOK FORWARD & UPWARD!**

FAITH chapter - Hebrews 11:10 – (Abraham) -For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

11:13-16 - All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. ¹⁴ **People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.** ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ **Instead, they were longing for a better country**—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Hebrews 11:20-22 - By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

²¹ **By faith Jacob**, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

²² **By faith Joseph**, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.

ALL LOOKED AHEAD!

Hebrews 11:25 – (**Moses**) **He chose** to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. **HOW COULD HE DO IT?**

11:26 – He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

11:37-40 – (Many other prophets) They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— ³⁸ *the world was not worthy of them*. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

³⁹ These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, ⁴⁰ since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

NOW LISTEN UP CLOSE...

Hebrews 12:2 - ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

12:1 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,

STOP LOOKING IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR AND GET ON WITH LIFE!

LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT & SIN:

Wanna know why you can't stop DRINKING, SMOKING, CUSSING, ADULTERY,

IMPROPER VIDEOS, etc... Because you like it!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

UNTIL OUR LOVE FOR HIM OVER POWERS OUR LOVE FOR SIN - NOTHING WILL CHANGE!

***CLOSE:**

The axe must get laid to the root!

HERE THE INSTRUCTION!

**** **Philippians 3:13** - Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. ***But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind*** and straining toward what is ahead,

"THIS ONE THING I DO"

Only focused believers can shed the baggage & clutter of yesterday to enjoy a great tomorrow!

Psalms 27:4 - ***One thing I ask from the Lord***, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.

PRAISE & WORSHIP TEAM

UNTIL YOU AND I ARE READY TO GET FOCUSED ON OUR PRESSING NEED TO REPENT

--- **NOTHING ELSE** IS GOING TO HAPPEN IN OUR LIFE! ---

Matthew 3:11 - "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you ***with the Holy Spirit and fire***."

John said that if we would **prepare ourselves with "axe to root" repentance**

HE WOULD BAPTIZE US WITH THE (Acts 2:4) HOLY GHOST!

- That is a promise!

ONLY 3 THINGS CAN KEEP US FROM RECEIVING:

1. Unrepentant Attitude
2. Insincerity (not hungry)
3. Lack of open Praise