



SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 14, 2024 | PASTOR JONATHAN BARBER

MESSAGE TITLE: PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE LORD

MESSAGE SERIES/OCCASION: LOVING CHRIST SUPREME'LY

MESSAGE TEXT: MARK 1:1-8

INTRODUCTION:

Mark 1:1-8 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; ²As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. ³The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ⁴John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁵And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; ⁷And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. ⁸I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

It is mindboggling to me to think that the coming of the Lord Jesus, the promised Messiah, needed any preparation. How is it that any preparation is needed? We know from Paul's letter to the Galatians, that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4). We don't know what

all went into “the fulness of time,” but we do know that part of God’s plan was to use ordinary people like you and me in His redemptive plan.

- John the Baptist was the forerunner
- The Apostles were the co-laborers
- We today are His ambassadors

It is the privilege, right, and responsibility for disciples of Jesus Christ to help prepare the way for the entrance of the Messiah into the lives of those who will believe.

Verse 1:

Mark 1:1-8 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God...

This is the title of the book. It is the story of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

- Good News—“the gospel!”
- Promised Messiah—“Jesus Christ”
- God in flesh—“the Son of God”

It was Mark’s mission to present the life and ministry of Jesus Christ in an effort to help people come to a saving knowledge of Lord Jesus. He begins in “the beginning” which for Mark is not simply the beginning of Christ’s public ministry, his “beginning” goes all the way back to the prophets of the Old Testament. He begins with John the Baptist, the promised forerunner of the Messiah.

Good News speaks of the glad tidings that would precede the coming of a King. Tidings of a victorious king; tidings of a newly crowned king; in either case, the heralds went out to prepare the people to receive him.

The Gospel message is good news! Therefore, the Christian demeanor should be joy. We have lifechanging glad tidings. Unless those tidings have become old and dull and distant, joy should still be our “default” setting.

As we consider the impact of John the Baptist, I would like us to consider this thought this morning: “How can you and I prepare

people to meet the Lord?” While John the Baptist can give us a very helpful example to learn from, we must be confronted with our own responsibility.

Proposition: In light of John the Baptist’s example, Christians today should seek to fulfill their God-given responsibilities as those who have also been charged to point people to Jesus.

1. Like John the Baptist, fulfill your God-ordained Role

Mark 1:2-3 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. ³The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

a. Prophecies fulfilled

Malachi 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

Isaiah 40:3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

b. Precedents considered

- i. The custom of heralds going before a king to announce his imminent arrival
- ii. The custom of working ahead on straightening out the crooked paths, sometimes leveling, smoothing, raising, lowering, or ordering the path to make the king’s journey more comfortable.

c. Practical Application - What is our God-ordained role?

i. Ambassadors

2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.

ii. Gospels

Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

iii. Disciplers

Matthew 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

2. Like John the Baptist, preach a message of Repentance

⁴John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁵And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

a. What was John's Baptism?

i. Baptism was not new to the Jews

1. They baptized their proselytes upon conversion as part of their ceremonial cleansing.
2. They "baptized" or washed all sorts of things ceremonially according to the Levitical laws of the OT.

ii. John's baptism was unique in that he baptized all those (including Jews) who would repent and confess their sins in anticipation of the coming Messiah. "Being baptized by John demonstrated a recognition of one's sin, a desire for spiritual cleansing, and a commitment to follow God's law in anticipation of the Messiah's arrival."

iii. Those baptized by John would not have made the connection to the "death, burial, and resurrection" imagery. Rather, they would have

made more of a connection, as OT saints, with the imagery of cleansing and purification—something OT saints were very accustomed to.

- iv. “repentance”—a change of the mind; specifically in regards to one’s view of their sin and their need for a saviour.
- v. “confessing”—part of John’s baptism was indeed confession—“to say the same thing” about your sin as God says.
- vi. John’s baptism served a purpose, but was insufficient longterm. (see the book of Acts)

Acts 19:1-6 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, ²He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. ³And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. ⁴Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. ⁵When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

[**Note:** John’s ministry does reinforce the doctrine of immersion. John 3:23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.]

b. What was John’s message?

- i. **He clearly and boldly preached on sin**

1. He exposed the Pharisees sin “generation of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come”
2. He exposed the sin of King Herod
3. He preached against the sins of the people
4. He did not just preach on the good news; he proclaimed the bad news too.
Are you and I willing to do both?

ii. He preached for repentance “bring forth fruits therefore meet for repentance”

1. John did not preach what people *wanted* to hear, he preached what they *needed* to hear.
2. The good news isn’t really all that good if you neglect the bad news.
3. John’s confrontational preaching was used of God to produce a great harvest
 - a. All they of Judea and Jerusalem
 - b. They met at the Jordan
 - i. This was necessary in order to accomplish immersion
 - ii. This was necessary in order to be public
 - c. When preachers preach biblically and boldly, the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).
 - i. You won’t need to generate results. God will do that.
 - ii. Powerless preaching breeds self-dependent results.

iii. He proclaimed their need for the Savior

3. Like John the Baptist, point people to their Redeemer

⁶And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; ⁷And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. ⁸I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

a. His manner of life was simple, and practical

- i. Camel's hair—cheap and warm; but not necessarily comfortable
- ii. Leather girdle (belt)—practical and resourceful
- iii. Locusts and wild honey
 1. locusts were permitted under OT law as a clean food source. They were eaten back then and are still eaten by some middle easterners today. Locusts were considered a common food, but nonetheless, a good source of protein.
 2. Wild honey was considered to be an inferior honey to that which was farmed.

iv. Application:

1. In short, his manner of life was like his message—a bit course, but practical and to the point; no frivolities
2. He was not intent on men-pleasing; he has One person he was focused upon.
3. He didn't impress people with Himself; He pointed people to Jesus.

b. His mission in life was to lift up the Savior

- i. He referred to himself as one not fit to untie his master's shoe
 1. Only the lowest of the lowly servants had the job of taking of shoes and washing feet.

2. He says he isn't even worthy of the lowliest of jobs concerning the Savior.
- ii. He referred to Jesus as the one "mightier than I."
 1. John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.
 2. When questioned repeatedly about himself, he simply replied, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord."
 3. When His John's disciples complained about Jesus taking away their followers, he said, "²⁷John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. ²⁸Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. ²⁹He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.
- iii. John is an example of Christocentric living and Christocentric preaching
 1. John acknowledged, "I can make you wet, but only Jesus can make you clean."
 - a. John baptized with water
 - b. Jesus baptized with the Holy Ghost
 2. John's existence was all about lifting up Jesus
 - a. "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world"

Conclusion:

John the Baptist was committed to His mission of preparing the way for the Lord Jesus. But the real question is this, “Are you and I committed to our mission of bringing Jesus to the nations?”

- Are you fulfilling your God-ordained role in our day?
- Are you willing to warn people about their sin?
- Are you about exalting yourself or exalting the Lord Jesus?

LIFE GROUP LEADER DISCUSSION GUIDE

Preparing the Way for the Lord

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Discussion Questions:

1. Are all Christians convinced that the Gospel is still good news? What factors impact our approach to this message?

2. Why do you suppose God called John the Baptist to prepare the way for the Lord?

3. What was "John's Baptism" and how was it different than that of today? What purpose did it serve?

4. What is “preaching for repentance?” How is it different than a lot of preaching in churches today?

5. Is John the Baptist’s style of bold preaching still viable for today? How should we approach the matter of sin today?

6. Was there any significance to John the Baptist’s clothing and manner of life? What are the takeaways if any?

7. What was the theme of John the Baptist’s life and ministry (John 3:30)?

8. Though He ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17), why is it significant that the Bible says that John performed no miracles (John 10:41)?

9. Why was John selflessness and humility so important to his message?

10. How would Jesus baptize us with the Holy Ghost?

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Adult Fellowship (Shane might want to do this again - I'll confirm)

- This Friday, April 19th - 6:00 pm

- Held in the church fellowship hall

- Please sign up by Tuesday
- An email was sent with more details and a link to sign up

Hillside Activity

- Friday, April 26th
- More details and a link to sign up at hillsideya.com

Youth Service

- Postponed until Wednesday, May 22nd

Marriage Retreat

- May 24th - 25th
- Sign up by Sunday, May 12th
- An email was sent with more details and a link to sign up