

CWB - Gospel Lesson - Advent 2 - December 7, 2014 - Kieth Bernard Kuschel

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Mark 1:1-8

{1} The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. {2} It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"-- {3} "a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" {4} And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. {5} The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. {6} John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. {7} And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. {8} I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Prepare  
For what?  
How?

Prepare?

## PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE LORD

### I. Renounce Sin

#### A. John the Baptist

1. Life style - no attraction
2. Voice, message - important

#### B. Message

1. Picture - straight paths
2. Repentance for forgiveness
3. Results - confessed sin

#### C. Our preparation

1. Not the usual
2. Repent - same as always
3. Repent of wasting resources
4. Repent of alcohol abuse
5. Name your own

### II. Announce Savior

#### A. John the Baptist

1. Prophet
2. Focuses on Jesus

#### B. Don't focus on John

1. Pointed away to Jesus
2. Jesus direct giver of Holy Spirit

#### C. Our preparation/ messengering

1. Children, music
2. Worship
3. Live Nativity
4. Conversations/actions point to Jesus

Be John the Baptist. Renounce. Announce

IA1 John the Baptist. A man who preached out in the wilderness areas around the Jordan River. A man who wore clothing made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist. A man who ate locusts and wild honey. Which of the above would have attracted you to him? Which of the above would have led you to follow him? None of them. The only important thing about him, the only thing that lured people to him was his message.

2 The words before us today tell us that. The Old Testament quotes call him a messenger, someone who is bringing a message from God to the people. He is called a voice. The only important thing about a voice is what it says. "John came preaching." {4} Making proclamations for people to hear. The proclamations were about Jesus. Mark calls the ministry of John the Baptist {1}The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

B1 John's directive to the people was: 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'{3} Just as a messenger was sent ahead of a king to get people to repair the road on which the king was to travel, so John was sent ahead of God's Son, Jesus of Nazareth, to prepare the hearts of the people for Christ's coming.

2 "And so John came." {4} Sent by God to fulfill God's commission to prepare people for Jesus. He was to do this by being a voice calling people to repent so that they might receive the forgiveness of sins. Calling on them to admit that they were sinners, confess their sins to the Lord, seek the Lord's forgiveness, trust the Lord's forgiveness, and ask the Lord to help them conquer sin in the future.

3 There were results when John called on people to prepare for the Lord by renouncing their sins. "Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River." {5} Their action indicated that the Holy Spirit had used John's preaching to bring them to repentance. Their actions said, "We know we are sinners. We want to be assured of the forgiveness of sins by having the waters of baptism applied to us. We want to publicly renounce sin. We want to publicly say that we trust in Jesus. We want to have the Lord's power in our lives to avoid sin in the future." Their hearts were thus prepared for the Lord.

C1 "Prepare the way for the Lord." How are we preparing for Christmas? John doesn't tell us to prepare by getting our Christmas shopping done. He doesn't tell us to prepare by picking out and putting up our Christmas tree. He doesn't tell us to prepare by sending out our Christmas cards. He doesn't tell us to prepare by getting everything ready for the family gathering. He doesn't tell us to prepare by getting everything ready to leave to go somewhere for the holidays.

2 He tells us to prepare by repenting. He tells us to prepare by confessing sins. He tells us to prepare by renouncing sin. He tells us our hearts need to be ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus so the Lord can smoothly travel into our hearts again this Christmas season. And you say, "SO?!! That's no special Christmas message. That is God's message all the time." You know, you are right. So let's make it special. Let's talk about repenting and renouncing sins that are directly connected with Christmas.

3 There are some sins unique to the Christmas season that we need to repent of and renounce. When I let the traditions that swirl around me at Christmas time, or when I let the "I have to do this because everybody else is doing it" attitude, or when I let the "I have to do this because my children will think I am a terrible parent," attitude, push me into extravagant expenditures, which put me deeply in credit card debt running at 18 -22% interest so that I cannot appropriately fund things like my family's medical needs or my child's Christian education during the rest of the year, I am sinning. I need to repent of that and ask God to help me overcome the temptation. I need to ask the Lord to give me the strength to say, "No. I will not do this. I will not jeopardize the stability of my family."

4 When I let the traditions that swirl around me at Christmas time, or when I let the "I have to do this because everybody else is doing it" attitude, or when I let the "I have to do this because my friends will think I am a no fun to be around," attitude, push me into abusing alcohol, I am sinning. Even though I refuse to abuse my body or put myself into a situation in which the Holy Spirit is not in control of my life the rest of the year, alcohol abuse is still a sin, even if it happens at a Christmas party. Can you meaningfully say, "Jesus is the reason for the season," at the company party if your words are slurred? I need to repent of that and ask God to help me overcome the temptation. I need to ask the Lord to help me say, "No. I will not do this and destroy my ability to share Jesus with others."

5 You can add to the list of Christmas sins. John says to you today. Prepare the way for the Lord. Repent of and renounce sin.

IIA1 John the Baptist. A messenger of God. There had been many of those. Name some. A preacher of repentance. Name some. Elijah. Jeremiah. Ezekiel. A man who was to prepare people for the Lord. All the prophets of God did that. But John was to prepare people for the coming into the world of the Lord. He was to tell people that the Lord had kept His promise. The Messiah had been born. He was to tell people that this Messiah was about to start His public activity. In a unique sense John prepared people for the Lord. Nobody else had that specific job.

2 Mark underlines that with the first verse of his Gospel. {1}The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This is not going to be a record of God's grace in general. This is not going to be the record of another one of God's prophet's activity among God's people. This is the beginning of the good news about Jesus. Mark calls Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, the One anointed by God to live and die and rise to provide humans with forgiveness, righteousness and eternal life. He also unashamedly calls Him the Son of God. True God from eternity. The second person of the Holy Trinity. Lord in the true sense of the word - the eternally existing One.

B1 In order to prepare the people for the Lord, John had to direct their attention to Him. John wasn't out of touch with reality. He knew that the people who had come out to hear him preach and teach and to be baptized could easily have focused on him. So he had to make sure he directed their attention away from him. He directed their attention to Jesus the Messiah. So he says in a very self-deprecating way, "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie." {7}

2 As evidence of that John pointed to one of the activities that he was involved in. Baptism. John's baptism was a powerful tool. It was for the forgiveness of sins. There is no greater blessing than the forgiveness of sins. But John was saying that he had to be involved in giving this blessing by using one of the tools that God had given, namely baptism. Jesus on the other hand is a direct supplier of the Holy Spirit since Jesus is God Himself. The emphasis is - Jesus is greater than John.

C1 Messengers of God. People who are to announce to others that the Savior, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God is coming, has come and will come. That's what all of us are. We do quite a bit of preparing to announce the Savior during the month of December. Maybe more than at any other time of the year. Many of you are preparing to carry out your functions for the Christmas service presented by the children. Our children are working hard to learn Scripture and songs so they are able in public The choir and the instrumentalists are preparing special music for our get togethers.

2 Messengers of God. People who are to announce to others that the Savior, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God is coming, has come and will come. That's what all of us are. We do that when we gather together on Sunday mornings, the children's Christmas service, Dec 24, and Dec 25. We do that to benefit each other. Amidst all the unbelief and doubt and skepticism and ridicule that Christianity gets regularly, we need to take the responsibility to announce the Savior to each other, so the Lord can use His Word to reinforce our faith and our commitment.

3 Messengers of God. People who are to announce to others that the Savior, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God is coming, has come and will come. That's what all of us are. That's what Christians do at special presentations, like Live Nativity Scenes.

4 Messengers of God. People who are to announce to others that the Savior, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God is coming, has come and will come. That's what all of us are. John pointed people away from himself to Jesus. We need to point people away from a lot of things at this time of the year to Jesus. We want everybody to have the blessings of Jesus the Savior. We want everybody around us to have the forgiveness, righteousness and eternal life which Jesus won by His life, death and resurrection. Do our conversations and our actions related to Christmas always make at least one comment that Jesus is what Christmas is about? Do our activities and our conversations always inform others that Jesus is the most important thing in our lives? When we do that we are announcing by implication that Jesus ought to be the reason for everybody's season and the meaning behind everybody's life.

Be like John the Baptist. Prepare the way for the Lord. Renounce sin. Announce the savior. **LORD Jesus, please help me to prepare the way for You by renouncing sin and announcing that You are the Savior.**