

THE ANTICIPATION

Matthew 3:1-12

I. HOW DO WE PREPARE?

- A. *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (3:3).*
- B. At Home:
 - 1. We spend hours searching for the perfect tree.
 - 2. We spend days shopping for the perfect gifts.
 - 3. We spend the season preparing for and attending parties.
- C. At Church:
 - 1. We put up the Chrismon Tree.
 - 2. We pull out the Nativity Scene.
 - 3. We light the Advent Candles.
- D. In Our Lives:
 - 1. We turn away from the ways of the world.
 - 2. We return to the ways of Christ.
 - 3. We confess our sins, repent, and open ourselves to a changed life.

II. HOW DO WE REPENT?

- A. *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (3:2).*
- B. Confess Your Sin.
 - 1. A mark of Christian maturity is what you would do if you knew no one would find out.
 - 2. Do we have a reward and punishment religion?
 - 3. We must agree with God that what we are doing is wrong.
 - 4. “Confession is like the sea – a person can bathe in it at any hour.”
- C. Remove the Evil.
 - 1. “If a man has an unclean thing in his hands, he may wash them in all the seas of the world, and he will never be clean; but if he throws the unclean thing away, a little water will suffice.”
 - 2. Levels of Repentance:
 - a. Level 1 – A theological version of a New Year’s resolution. It deals with important, but superficial issues.
 - b. Level 2 -- This goes deeper. We not only change what we do, but who we are. We turn from despair to faith; from selfishness to kindness.
- D. Learn to Do Good.
 - 1. We need to know what to repent from, but an even greater question is what we need to repent toward.
 - 2. The opposite of sin is not sinlessness. Holiness is not the absence of sin. Holiness is the presence of love.
 - 3. Replace the ways of the world with the ways of Christ!

Prayer Concerns: Members – Burney Biesel, **Jim Mohead**, Dorothy Miles, Carolyn Perkins, **Jerry Shauf**, Ginny Ramage...
Friends – Janice Arnold, Pat Bryan, Willis Chapman, Emily Davis, Reggie Deloach, Tyla Fowlkes, Brandon Funderburk, Margaret Hayes, Teresia Hilliard, Ed Hinson, Gary Hinson, Debra Holt, Gene Hrcir, Matt Jennings, Jeff Joyner, Kim Evans Lee, **Wanda O'Dell**, Jimmy Patterson, Sue Steward, **Earl Vickery**, Allen Voss, Todd Warren ...

Christian Sympathy is extended to **Janie Canada and her family** in the death of her mother, **Mildred Chandler**, on Monday, December 3, 2007 and to **Peggy Bradshaw and family** in the death of her sister-in-law, **Jo Anne Bradshaw**, on Friday, November 30.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Loving God, sometimes we forget why we're doing all this. Advent is such a wonderful time of the year, and we start our preparation as soon as possible. There are so many distractions that sometimes we forget. There is shopping and decorating and parties to attend. There are special services at the church and special times with our family. Then we see the nightly news and read the paper. There is a war going on outside and inside our country. There are wars raging outside and inside our families. There is anger and rage when there should be peace and love. There are so many distractions that we sometimes forget why we're doing all this.

Then we remember your Son. We remember that he came into this world to bring hope and peace to people like us. He came to troubled people living in a troubled time. Help us to remember that Christmas dwells in our hearts and not in the mall. Our Christmas spirit is not determined by the news or what others are doing, but by what Jesus is doing in our lives. May we also remember that your good news calls for a change of heart. It challenges us to live in a way that brings joy to the world and joy to you. Help us to slow down and experience your peace as we prepare for your coming. This we pray through the one whose birth we anticipate, Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray ...

THE LORD'S PRAYER: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

MATTHEW 3:1-12

In those days came John the Baptist, 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."

Now John wore a garment of camel hair, and a leather girdle around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit that befits repentance, and do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 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.

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

SERMON SCHEDULE

In the Sanctuary:

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| December 16 | <i>The Answer</i> | Matthew 11:2-11 |
| December 23 | <i>The Announcement</i> | Matthew 1:18-25 |
| December 24 | <i>Christmas Eve Communion</i> | 6:00 & 9:00 p.m. |
| December 30 | <i>Post-Christmas Blues</i> | 10:40 a.m. Worship Only |
| | | Matthew 2:1-12 |

On the Radio (1450 AM & 102 FM):

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| December 16 | <i>Once Upon a Time</i> | Matthew 1:18-25 |
| December 23 | <i>Don't Forget to Remember Me</i> | Luke 2:1-20 |
| December 30 | <i>Choosing Another Way</i> | Matthew 2:1-12 |