

Have You Ever Heard John the Baptist Preach?

Week 3

Have You Heard John Preach?

1. "Have you heard John preach: It must have been persuasive, because all the multitude came out there. And when the sermon was over, they came over and said, 'John, what are we to do?' (Fred Craddock)

The modern preacher who to my mind bears the closest resemblance to John the Baptist would be Billy Graham. Billy Graham preached to more people than any preacher who has ever lived. He had the help of radio and television. He probably gave more sermons than any other preacher.

It was through radio and television that I heard Billy Graham. The Hour of Decision was heard every Sunday afternoon on our radio station. I can safely say that in all the times I listened to Billy Graham on the radio or watched him on television, I heard only heard one sermon. His sermons were always about one thing, my need for Christ in my life. True peace, true joy, and true hope can only be found in accepting Christ and his offer of eternal life with God.

His sermons were not deep but they were delivered with conviction and authority, as no doubt John's sermons were delivered. The importance and urgency of the decision was paramount to both. The time was now, the kingdom will not wait, tomorrow will be too late.

There were those who criticized Billy Graham and I suspect John the Baptist had his critics as well. They would be criticized for the simplicity of their message and for a shallow theology but that didn't matter. Their sermons were powerful. They addressed the deepest human need, the need for Christ in their lives. True peace, true joy, true hope can only be found by surrendering oneself to Christ and accepting his offer of eternal life. They resulted in changed lives.

2. *Kerygma* is the Greek word that is translated as preaching. However, it always refers to not just the It always While it may mean “to preach” the idea of proclamation is always present.

Preaching is always about proclamation. Sermons may contain teaching, they may be words of encouragement, they may be exhortations, but sermons must always be about proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

The gospels do not tell how many years John spent preaching and baptizing in the dessert. What is apparent is that his ministry ended shortly after he baptized Jesus. He must have given hundreds, if not thousands of sermons and if the records of Matthew, Mark and Luke are correct, and there seems to be agreement amongst them, his message must have been repeated over and over again. He must have been, as far as preaching was concerned, the Billy Graham of his day.

Of course, Mark is the briefest of the three evangelists in his summary of John’s preaching. “He preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”

Mark notes that John that “one more powerful” than himself” was coming. While John baptized with water, the one who was coming would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

I leave the final comment on John’s preaching to Fred Craddock:

“Have you heard John preach: It must have been persuasive, because all the multitude came out there. And when the sermon was over, they came over and said, ‘John, what are we to do?’ (Fred Craddock)

3. Scriptures

Mark 1:1-8

Luke 3:1-20

Matthew 3:1-12

4 and 5 Let us Pray:

O Lord, Who hast given us the Scriptures to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our feet and a light unto our paths, grant that Thy Holy Spirit, Who proceedeth from Thee, may enlighten our minds and kindle our hearts, and that as Thy Son has promised, He may lead us into all truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Week 3 Scriptures

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,

who will prepare your way” —

“a voice of one calling in the wilderness,

‘Prepare the way for the Lord,

make straight paths for him.”

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 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. John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Luke 3:1-20

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,

‘Prepare the way for the Lord,

make straight paths for him.

Every valley shall be filled in,

every mountain and hill made low.

The crooked roads shall become straight,

the rough ways smooth.

And all people will see God's salvation.'"[a]

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 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."

"What should we do then?" the crowd asked.

John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with

unquenchable fire.” And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother’s wife, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

Matthew 3:1-12

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

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

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. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

But 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? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 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. 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.

“I baptize you with[b] 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[c] the Holy Spirit and fire. His 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.”