

Ministry of Reconciliation

Luke 3:7-14

⁷He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

⁸Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

⁹Even 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.”

¹⁰And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?”

¹¹And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics^{al} is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.”

¹²Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”

¹³And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.”

¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation and be content with your wages.

John the Baptist called for genuine repentance.

God calls for genuine repentance.

I want you to be genuinely repentant.

Genuine repentance calls for a genuine message. Verse 7

⁷He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

Some Ministers of the Gospel/Pastors of Jesus Christ have forgotten who it is that they preach.

Jesus Christ is the one true God.

He is the “GREAT I AM!”

I have heard of churches where the pastor was forced to leave because he dared to mention hell in his sermons.

Others have been asked to leave because they call sin: **SIN**.

I can only imagine, the look on the faces of the leaders at one of today's mega churches if the Pastor were to look out into the congregation that was overflowing with visitors and yelled out:

**“Brood of vipers!
Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”**

Not only would the deacons and the personnel committee call an emergency meeting to discuss the fastest way to remove the Pastor, but many of the faithful Church members would swear they would never return because the Pastor was too judgmental.

We see in the verses just prior to this that John had been traveling all over the area telling people to repent.

The fact that he was preaching repentance tells us that he was preaching to sinners.

So why would he insult the very people that he was trying to reach when they showed up to hear him?

We find the answer in verse eight.

We must realize our need for repentance.

Verse 8

^sBear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

There were people who showed up to hear John because they had heard of his preaching and they were curious, but they did not fully understand what it was that was required of them.

John probably recognized this because of a couple different reasons.

First: he had not personally told this group of people that he was speaking to about their need for repentance.

When he asks them in verse seven who warned them to flee this question carries with it the idea that he was not the one who had told them.

Also, from his statement in verse eight it would seem that maybe he heard some of them boasting about the fact that they were Jews the sons of Abraham, as if they had no need of repentance.

Many people across our country show up to church, hear about repentance and think to themselves:

- **‘I have no need of repentance.**
- **My mother and father helped build this church.’**
- **Or ‘I have been reading the Bible for longer than that preacher has been alive.’**
- **My personal favorite, I was here before you Pastor and I will be here after you.**

John does not want to hear any of it.

He says do not give me your excuses give me your lives.

God can take the rocks that our outside this Church and create Children of the parents who built it.

He can create people out of those rocks who have read their Bibles all their lives.

In verse nine he explains why these things are not good enough.

We must repent before it is too late.

Verse 9

'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.'

Jesus Christ is coming!

There will be no more room for those who believe that their heritage or pedigree can save them.

John tells the crowd that this family tree is about to be cut down and everyone who is found clinging to it will be thrown in the fire.

If God will cast the children of His chosen nation into the fire for their sins how much more will He judge those who live in sin and deny that He is God?

You will die one day, and on that day, if you are found to be a tree which does not bear good fruit you will be cast into the fire.

The people who were listening to John that day did not make excuses.

Verse 10

"And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?"

When they realized that they were in danger of being thrown into the fire they asked Him **"...What shall we do then?"**

I believe many Pastors with a heart for the lost, --today wish for a time when--- people feared God and asked questions such as this one.

"I once read that the greatest lie Satan has ever told man is that he is not real."

Once man began to believe that **Satan was not real** it was not long before **he decided that God was not real.**

If you tell a man that he is going to go to never-land when he dies, **he is as likely to believe you as he is**, if you tell him he is going to hell.

The unfortunate result of this is that many men die and go to hell for eternity.

Thank God for the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

Without God the Spirit it is unlikely that anyone in our culture would receive Christ. Still God has chosen to give all mankind a free will.

Man has used this free will to turn away from God ever since the beginning of time.

Adam disobeyed God's command even though he was in a perfect place and he was able to personally fellowship with God one on one.

Because of the evil world that has resulted from that fall-- we live in a time when men **will reject the Holy Spirit of God** as just **an emotional experience** that has no place in a rational man's mind.

My brothers and sisters,

Jesus Christ is real,

Sin is real,

Hell is real,

and TRUE Salvation is REAL!

We must allow God to use us where we are.

Verses 11-14

¹¹ And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics¹¹ is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."

¹² Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

¹³ And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do."

“Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation and be content with your wages.

I have shared many times to many people **that true repentance is to turn to God.**

There is a lot of truth in that statement, but as I have noddled it over and over, and I have concluded, that it is actually not the proper definition of the word.

The correct definition **is a change of mind.**

Not a change of mind like I wanted Burger King, but now I want McDonalds. It is **A change of mind more like I wanted to live for myself now I must live for Jesus Christ.**

The idea of turning to God remains, true but it carries with it the idea of turning your mind toward God so that it is forever changed.

In verse eleven we see a person who has more than he needs --- changing his mind so that he shares with those in need instead of getting as much as he can for himself.

In verse twelve and thirteen we see people who were dishonest changing their mind and becoming honest.

In verse fourteen we see people abusing their authority in such a way as to cause others harm. However, they change their mind and become good stewards of their powers. This is true Christianity.

**There is no salvation apart from repentance.
There is no repentance apart from a changed mind.**

John the Baptist was given an awesome responsibility.

- He was to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ.
- He did not choose to ask people for money to throw a party.
- He did not choose to ask people to cook a big meal.

- He did not choose to tell people that Jesus is coming, and everything is going to be ok.
- He served his purpose even to the point of death.
- He told people to repent of their sins.

Have you experienced genuine repentance or a change of mind in your life?

Have you realized your need for repentance?

We are all, at one time or another, a brood of vipers.

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¹³ And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.”

¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation and be content with your wages.”

If you were to die today what would you carry with you to get into Heaven?

We must be ready to go with empty hands trusting in Christ alone.

Are you still making excuses?

Satan is REAL!

Are you willing to allow God to use you where you are?

Becoming a Christian does not mean you leave your position in life ---
it does mean that you use your position in life to serve Christ.

Friends pray with me.