

John the Baptist

Luke 3:8

Introduction

SKIT (Judy Ayers & Sandy Gates) Take the trash out. Needed: trash can, 2 clothes pins, trash in the can, extra trash can liner.

There are things we just flat out need to get rid of. When things start to stink, when things start to rot, we have 2 choices: We can either hold our nose, or we can get rid of it. It doesn't make sense to keep the stench around. By the way, Jr Worship is studying the same topic today. Parents, you can talk to your kids about this when you get together at lunch.

In November of 2009, Anthony Soles was arrested and charged with murder. Police found 11 bodies in his house. **PICTURE** Some of the bodies had been there for a long time. The smell was so bad, that during the summer, the small sandwich shops and restaurants in the neighborhood closed down. Neighbors complained. The sewer system was cleaned out, and yet no one went inside Soles' house to see what the problem was. The smell was so bad, it seemed to come from everywhere.

The reason a human body is buried 6 feet underground is because that is the minimum depth needed to keep the smell of decay from reaching the surface. That smell of death and decay is horrible. It is not tolerable, and yet there a lot of us that just don't seem to mind that smell.

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus. He was Jesus' cousin, and he was the prophet for the Messiah. John preached to a society who wasn't willing to get rid of the trash that stunk up their lives. John preached to Israel, that if they wanted to accept and be accepted by the coming Messiah, they needed to stop stinking. His main message was simple:

Luke 3:8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.**1. Produce Fruit**

- a. The people to whom he was speaking needed to know what that meant, so they asked him. I thought it was great that they interrupted his sermon to ask a really good question. I don't necessarily recommend we continue that tradition, but I liked it way back then. Look at what the people listening to John said:
- b. **Luke 3:10 "What should we do then?" the crowd asked.**
- c. John answered, stop with the clothespin on the nose, and take out the trash, and when you are done there, spray a little air-freshener too.
- d. **Luke 3:11 John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same."**

¹²Tax collectors also came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?”

¹³“Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.

¹⁴Then 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.”

- e. If we were to ask John that question, how would he answer us? Would he say, “Here’s what God wants you to do:”
 - i. Share with others. If you have 2 blankets, give one to the one in need.
 - ii. Be content with your pay.
 - iii. Would he tell us, “You’re doing fine, keep up the good work.”?
 - iv. Treat your spouse a lot better.
 - v. Stop ripping off your boss and get to work.
 - vi. Don’t just go to church, be a part of the church.
 - vii. Respect your parents.
 - viii. Help out your neighbor.
 - ix. Turn off the computer and do something.
- f. Most people wouldn’t ask what they need to do. The crowd with John the Baptist did because they recognized something stunk.
- g. We are supposed to be producing fruit
 - i. Jesus said, **Matthew 7:17 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.**
 - ii. Jesus was talking about what determines whether a person is of God, or just pretends to be of God. The Christian, or Godly person produces good fruit. They do something.
 - iii. Sure, they go to Bible Studies and Sunday School and stuff, but they do something that affects and helps the lives of others.
 - iv. The ministry bulletin board is out in the hallway so anyone can volunteer their special abilities to help, and anyone can ask for help. Go check it out, and be a part of ministry. We are to produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

2. Keeping with repentance

- a. The reason the crowd interrupted John the Baptist, (which is of course something we must never do – interrupt a sermon) – is because John kicked out from under them, their sole means, or at least their sole understanding of salvation:
- b. **Luke 3:8 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. ⁹The 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.”**
- c. These people thought they were saved because they were born into it, and God owed that to them.
- d. Recently it has been agreed upon by a bunch of scientists, that dolphins are so smart, that they should be classified as “non human persons”.

- i. This means they would have the same rights as people, because they are as smart as people.
- ii. I know some people the dolphins are definitely smarter than. However, now I am waiting to see the first attorney line up to sue Sea World for unlawfully enslaving a person – a dolphin.
- iii. You and I know the concept is more than a little bit silly. After all, if they really were as smart as people, if they really were persons, they would do a little more about the environment where they live.
 - 1. They would be able to avoid hanging out with tuna because that is where the nets are that take them away.
 - 2. They would have learned to speak other languages like shark and salmon, and jellyfish so they could have better relationships with others in their environment.
 - 3. There are no retirement places for dolphins where they can take care of the elderly. No dolphin doctors or dentists. No dolphin houses or hospitals. No dolphin manufacturing plants. Etc. Why would anyone calling himself a scientist say anything this ridiculous?
- iv. A dolphin is not a person. Jesus didn't come to die for all the people and the dolphins. However, there are a lot of people who think, just because they are people, or because they are created by God, and a loving God would never send anyone to hell, therefore, they don't have to worry about, or consider salvation – it is automatic. Why would anyone say anything that ridiculous? We aren't saved because we are a person. If we were, why would we be told to repent? Hey, if everyone goes to Heaven, get out there and do whatever you want, apparently God doesn't mind...
- v. Instead, we are told to produce fruit in keeping with repentance. We don't just say God owes me.
- vi. The people who say, "A loving God would never send anyone to hell." Are absolutely right. God doesn't send people to hell. People choose that option while they are here. God owes us nothing. We can earn nothing. But we can make a choice about whose we are what we will do with this life and the life to come.
- e. The people John was talking to had been raised to understand salvation was nothing more than owed to them because of who they were.
 - i. When it comes to salvation, no one can get by on keeping a list of rules, or by claiming to be chosen, or by claiming it as some kind of birthright.
 - ii. In our day, the best way to understand this is: We aren't saved just because we go to, or belong to, or were raised in a church. We aren't saved just because we got baptized. We aren't saved just because we can speak in tongues. We aren't saved because we don't smoke or drink or chew, or go out with girls who do.
 - iii. Most people think everyone else is a sinner. The murderers, and thieves, and liars, and immoral people. We usually don't want to think of ourselves that way.
 - iv. **Romans 3:23 ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**
 - v. We usually like to add to the end of that verse, "all have sinned except me".

Conclusion

In John the Baptist' day, the people were waiting for the Messiah. They were wondering if John was the one. John let them know he was not the Messiah. He wanted the people to know who Jesus was, and he told them about Jesus and His mission.

Luke 3:15 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. ¹⁶John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹⁷His 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."

2 things about Jesus' mission:

Gather

Throw away

The purpose of the winnowing fork was to toss all the stuff that was harvested into the air. The wind would blow away all the chaff, all the husks, and hulls. The wheat would fall back to the floor, to be picked up and brought into the store house. The chaff blew away, not because of the winnowing fork, but because of the qualities of the chaff.

John lets us know Jesus is using the winnowing fork with us, so we had better get rid of all the stuff that doesn't last – all the stuff that blows away – all the stuff that stinks. Gather it up, get rid of it, and spray a little air freshener around. Because we don't even need to smell all that stuff. We do this by producing fruit and keeping with repentance.

Luke 3:18 And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them.

This is good news. Some might not think so. Some don't want to have to produce fruit, let alone repent. A guy was filling out an application for a new job. On the form, he was asked why he quit his previous job. He wrote: "They insisted that all employees get to work by 8:45 every morning. Couldn't work under those conditions."

Jesus came to this earth to die for us. He has made it so we can live under those conditions. He came to this earth to show it could be done. John the Baptist introduced Jesus, and let us know that if we want to accept Him as Lord and Savior of our lives, we need to produce fruit in keeping with repentance. Can you live under those conditions?