The Season of Advent is about waiting and anticipating of what is to come. The third week of Advent is one of the hardest weeks to get through. You know why? It’s because we’ve come so far, yet so close, but we’re not quite there yet. Christmas is still more than 12 days away. It kind of epitomizes the whole Christian faith of living in an in-between time. Everything looks Christmas, feels like Christmas, the stage is set for Christmas, except with the 65° weather! The trees and the houses are decorated, the presents are bought and wrapped. What else must we do to prepare ourselves for Christmas? Between now and Christmas, we still have dinners and parties to attend, concerts to perform, extra sermons or bulletin to prepare for….etc. The list goes on and on and on.

 Without a doubt, this is a busy and a hectic time of the year for everyone. We find ourselves busily checking off items that are on our “To-Do” list while we may forget to hit the PAUSE button and ask ourselves, “*WHY are we doing WHAT we do? Where does the Savior’s birth fit into all of this? In the midst of all these commotions and frenzies, we must ask ourselves,* ***What Should We Do*** *to prepare ourselves to welcome Christ into our hearts?”*

 Today we are continuing the reading from the Gospel of Luke concerning John the Baptist, or John the Baptizer. John was a “no non-sense” kind of guy. He was not afraid to speak what’s on his heart in waking up those who were in a state of oblivions when it comes to their own personal faith. John called them out and referred them as **“*brood of vipers!” Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and be thrown into the unquenchable fire****.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

 Now, those are some pretty harsh words or warnings from John! Certainly not the greetings that anyone would like to hear, especially not during holiday season, when we’re supposed to be in good cheers and jovial spirit.

 Furthermore, seriously how many of us would appreciate it when we are told that what we’ve been doing needs to be changed? We would automatically put on a defensive mode. But that’s exactly what John was challenging all of us today, as well as those who came before him, seeking to be baptized by him with water. They realized that they needed to change….but the change does not take place by just immersion of water, real change occurs when we are awakened and cleansed from within, when we are repented and taken steps towards the right direction. What we need is more than the baptism by water but by fire and by the Holy Spirit, from the inside out.

 Our text today presents a HUGE challenge for all of us. I’m sure not many of us would want to hear this message of change either. Some of us might think that this message does not apply to us all. We’re perfect, why do we even need to change or repent? It’s the “other” people who need to be changed and not us!

 With our stubborn heads and reluctant hearts, we accuse others of their wrongs while neglecting to examine our own areas of flaws while we all fall short of God’s glory. **We’ve proclaimed ourselves to be the righteous ones, holier than others.**

 In the spirit of unity within the body of Christ, it’s not about who’s right or who’s wrong, but instead we must focus upon what unites us together. What must we do in order to edify the body for the sake of upbuilding of the church and for God’s glory.

 When John came to proclaim the mission of God through the coming Messiah. There were as much divisions or even confusion as there are today. Who are we to follow? What must we do next, in order to get there? Everybody’s got their different opinions and they all through they were right! Many were not quite sure how to deal with John. There had not been a prophet of this kind in more than 400 years. God’s voice had been silent during those years. Was John legitimate? Was he the Messiah? What if he was, or if he wasn’t?

 Verse 15 tells us that many of those who came to John were filled with great excitement and expectation of what was to come, but deep in their hearts, they probably still wondered if John were the Messiah whom the people have been waiting for? Could he be the One? Could he be the One?

 To much of their disappointment, the answer was “No”. John was NOT the Messiah. John was just the table-setter, the proclaimer, the messenger, the preparer of the way to the Lord. John came with a message of warning and preparation for all of us to take on. Unfortunately, our hearts are not ready to receive the Messiah just yet. There are still enough things on our “To-Do” list in order to prepare for the One who was, who is and who is to come. And it all begins with us, not pointing fingers at the others, but to us…through the examining of our hearts and an awakening of our senses of God’s grace in our lives.

 John’s call for our repentance is a **Call for ACTION**. A change of the heart means we must be willing to let go of things that we cherish the most. We must be willing to toss aside our selfish ambition and motivation. We must check our stubborn hearts and egos at the door. Why do we do what we do? What are we doing this for?

 **We proclaim and confess that we are the body of Christ, the adopted chosen people of God.** Whenever we fail to examine ourselves and justify our wrong-doings against God and our neighbors, we have **shamed God’s face** and **defamed God’s name**. In other word, we have defiled God’s perfect image of love, grace and humility as demonstrated through Christ.

 John put an ultimatum to the people to consider then (and to us today) that *every tree that does not bear good fruits will be cut down and be thrown into the fire.[[2]](#footnote-2)* Is bearing good fruits for God’s Kingdom on our Christmas “To-Do” list this year? What are WE going to do about it? Are we willing to bear the consequences of not doing what God is asking of us? Even out of these hearts of stones, which may be dry, hard and lifeless out in the desert, as John proclaimed, God is able to raise up children to Abraham.[[3]](#footnote-3)

 The crowd promptly responded “**What Should We Do?**” John replied to them saying, *“whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise.”* And for the tax collectors *“collect no more than what you are supposed to”* for your own personal gain. And for the soldiers, *“do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”*

To each of these categories of people among the crowd, John called them out individually. Each of them must bear their own responsibilities, with the authorities and the power that were given to them. John’s calling out in the wilderness was an outcry for **fairness** and **justice** among all of God’s people….between those who **“Have”** and those who **“Have Not”**; those who are in **power** and **control** and those who are being **oppressed** and **defenseless**; those who live in the **elite inner circle** vs. those who **live marginally looking in**.

 Jesus’s earthly mission was to be the reconciler of the world and to make things right in a radical fashion, by flipping the political and social order upside down. The first shall be last and the last shall be first. Those who exalt and think highly of themselves shall be humbled. Those who are weak shall be made strong.

 As the prophet Isaiah reminded us that *those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.[[4]](#footnote-4)*

Each of us must also do our parts in bearing fruits, worthy of our repentance. We are not saved by our lineage or by our affiliation with our ancestors, but we are saved only by the grace of God and our faithful obedience to the Spirit’s calling. God is the ultimate judge and not us. During these darkest days and the longest nights of the season, with Chanukah and the Winter Solstice upon us, God reveals to us that God’s light continues to shine and burn deeply within us, exceeding our expectations. More importantly, God has revealed to us that the very same light is also shining upon others as well, even those whom we express hate, jealousy, animosity, and hold our grudges against. This is the season that we need to get it right with God and with our neighbors as well. Love one another as Christ has already loved us. Forgive others as Christ has forgiven us.

 May this light of Christ penetrate us through our stubborn and hardened souls, hearts, and minds. May this light prompt us into action to help those around who are in needs. Pray that we may see others first instead of ourselves.

 **God expects his people to behave, not merely believe. We shall be Doers of God’s Word and not just Hearers! We shall be the Peacemaker, the Reconciler, and the Healers by demonstrating God’s justice and mercy upon those who insulted us, those who hurt us, those who stabbed us in our backs. We shall be the proclaimers of God’s truth, grace, and love to all of humanities, right here in our own backyard.**

 This, I think, is what the season of Advent all about….it’s about introspection by looking into our old habit and routine of life – the way we’ve been doing it for years. It’s about making a conscientious effort in making changes in the attitude of our hearts. It’s about getting it right (reconciling) with God and with one another.

 Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ has empowered us to be the proclaimer of the good news to all of God’s people. **What Should We Do or What Are WE Going to Do Next?**

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Luke 3:8-9* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Luke 3:9* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Luke 3:8* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Isaiah 40:31* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)