

GETTING READY FOR CHRISTMAS

(This message is not completely original with me)

Luke 3:3-6

Introduction: During a worship service as the pastor was preaching a man stood in the balcony and shouted, "I have a word from the Lord!" He was quickly "escorted" outside so not to upset or bother the congregation. God used a man like that once, a man who went around saying in a loud voice, "repent, get ready for the coming Messiah." That was of course, John the Baptist. "Prepare the way, make ready" are words that are used prior to some event happening. What type of preparations are you making for Christmas? Decorations, Christmas tree, wrapping gifts, sending cards buying things for the Christmas dinner. What kind of spiritual preparations are you making? Consider something like this:

I. REPENTANCE

1. What better way to prepare for the coming of the Son of God? Here the HOLY is visiting the unholy.
2. Christmas has no message for those who do not or will not realize that they are sinners.
- This is a side to Christmas most people don't know of or don't think of.
3. Two high school boys were suspended for a week for eating garlic. What was the big deal? They couldn't smell it on each other but everybody else who hadn't eaten garlic could and it was making everybody else sick.
4. How the two high school boys looked at eating garlic is the approach taken concerning sin. What's the big deal? What's the fuss, everybody's doing it. What's wrong with sin?
5. A mother had her son hoe the garden twice. She said that her son could do better than what he did the first time. She knew he hadn't given it his best the first time.
6. REPENT is something Christians need to do in preparation for Christmas. Of what? All that is beneath the dignity of God's family. Face it, you could have done better. All of us who are God's Children could have been doing things better. WE need to repent of that.

II. COMMIT TO RIGHTEOUS LIVING

1. Repentance is NOT being sorry and a promise not to do it any more.
- Those who kill, murder, take human lives, say that they're not all bad and that inside there's some good, too. Which is right for within all of us there is the potential of unlimited evil and unlimited good. We have it within us to do either.
2. When filling out an application, one is often asked to "list personal strengths." One of the areas of "personal strengths" is the area of "sometimes" and the applicant is asked to circle one of the following: Sometimes: trustworthy, loyal, thrifty, kind, obedient, friendly, cheerful, brave,

helpful, clean, reverent, etc.

- The next is to list "personal weaknesses" with "sometimes I am not:"

3. Children of God cannot be content with "sometimes my bad habits are....."

4. Bad habits cannot be reformed, there must be a complete change of heart, a totally new way of living established and that can only come when Repentance is made and one's life is turned over to the Lord Jesus for transformation.

III. PREPARE FOR CHRISTMAS BY RECEIVING GOD'S GRACE

1. Christians are disciples of Jesus, not John the Baptist.

- Christians are to repent, seek to live righteous, but find that they are unable to live as they ought.

- The answer for Christians not being able to live as they ought is to turn to Jesus for His mercy, His grace and receive His righteousness.

2. The story is told of a woman who had many children and one day she found one missing.

She finally found him with tar smeared all over him from his playing in a tar barrel. She told him that she could have another one easier than she could clean him up.

- God must feel that way about some of us. However, He does clean us up and give us a new start. Over and over again and again.

3. That is what Christmas is all about. Because of Christmas, we can have a new start.

4. Jerome, who translated the Bible from Greek into Latin had a dream at the end of his life and it was of the Christ Child coming to him. Jerome offered Him this and that and finally asked, "what do you want?" The Christ Child looked at him and said, "Give me your sin, that's what I came for."

CONCLUSION:

1. Christian, the best preparation for Christmas you and I can make is to REPENT! Be as God's Children should be.

2. Commit ourselves to live as God's Children should live.

3. Receive God's Grace and Love and allow Him to change us into what He wants us to be.