

Marks of Discipleship

January 10, 2020

Day 1: Luke 3:15

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ.

It is true today as it was in the first century that people are looking for signs of hope. We think that after 2,000 years everybody knows the Christian message (even if they do not believe it) and so knows where to look for help in life. Every generation needs to hear the Good News. Though it is in a different manner, we, like John the Baptist, are signs of hope for the next generation. We carry in ourselves the image of Christ.

Question: Are you good at waiting? Why or why not?

Challenge: Can you name three to five people that really seem Christ-like? Remember, they need not be perfect, for only God is perfect.

Scripture: Isaiah 52:7-12

Day 2: Luke 3:16

John 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.

John knew his mission and did not try to be more or less than he was. John called people to repent, to look at their lives and notice that their relationship to God was faulty. He pointed not only to Jesus, who was coming, but he was pointing them to how they could know that God was with them always. The Holy Spirit is that presence of God that is with us.

Question: Why do you think we use water in baptism today?

Challenge: How would you describe to someone "baptism with the Holy Spirit?"

Scripture: Luke 7:19-35

Day 3: Luke 3:17

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."

The words of John the Baptist sound hard to our ears. What he is saying is: it is God who will do the judging, not people. My life is not in the hands nor am I at the mercy of an individual or group. My life is in the hands of God and it is God's mercy that I can depend on. No king or ruler will decide my eternity, only God. John wants to make it clear that God is at work in our salvation, not another agency nor our own self.

Question: Can you tell good vegetables and fruits from bad ones? How do you do it?

Challenge: Think of some people that might be labeled "chaff." Now write down why they are chaff.

Scripture: Acts 5:26-42

Day 4: Luke 3:18

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

The Good News that John preached was that the promises God made to the ancestors are valid even though it does not feel or seem like it. It is like our relationship to God; at times we do not feel close to God and even wonder if we have been separated from God. Yet our relationship to God does not depend on how we feel about it but on the objective fact of Christ rising from the dead and our acceptance of Him as Lord.

Question: Do you recall a sermon that was very meaningful to you?

Challenge: Pick three people that you know and figure out what "good news" they need to hear.

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-3

Day 5: Luke 3:21

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened

In a dramatic moment Jesus comes to be baptized. His baptism is the beginning of his public ministry. It is in a sense His ordination by God to go teach, heal and preach. By our baptism we too are ordained to this ministry of teaching, healing and preaching.

Question: Do you know when you were baptized and where? If not, find out.

Challenge: Think back to a time when you felt God listening to you. What was taking place?

Scripture: Romans 10:12-21

Day 6: Luke 3:22-23

and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry.

In as dramatic a scene as the baptism, an appearance from God takes place. It is the beginning of Jesus' public ministry but more importantly it is the clearest statement of who Jesus really is. He is not a prophet or teacher but God incarnate - in human form. It is this truth we seek to proclaim to the world.

Question: Has someone ever told you that they are "well pleased" with you? Who?

Challenge: What do you think the difference is between Jesus being a teacher or prophet, and the Son of God?

Scripture: Matthew 4:23-25