

Be Amazed – At God’s Message . . . Luke 3:3-14

Read Luke 3:1-14

1-2 – this narrows the timing for John’s ministry to 27-29 AD

Final message in our Be Amazed series

This message is a simple message, but a hard one; a convicting one

Could very easily be titled – Be amazed at God’s convicting message

Want you to know that I stole it – it’s not original w/ me

No shame – person I stole it from stole it from others

His named John the Baptist

He stole it from any number of the OT prophets

Because from Noah to Malachi their main message – repent; turn back to God; and start acting like it

That’s the message this morning – Repent of your sins and Walk your talk

If you’re thinking – I don’t need this this morning . . .

Pray

Repent of your sins (v3-9)

God could have given a whole bunch of messages to John the Baptist

But the *word of God* (2), the message, that *came to John in the wilderness* (3:2), started with repentance

Mt 3:2 puts it this way – “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*”

Lk – he went around *proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins* (3)

He urged the people to see their sin as God sees it, turn from it, and then be baptized (immersed under water) as a sign they had done so

He wasn’t saying that the act of baptism somehow brings forgiveness

Nor was he saying that baptism was *necessary* for the forgiveness of their sins

He was saying – stop doing the wrong things, start doing the right ones, and get baptized to *show* it

So *John*’s baptism showed 2 things –

They were clean and forgiven before God

They were ready and waiting for the salvation to come, through faith in Jesus

Now, on this side of the cross, baptism shows you *have* been saved . . .

And, that you identify with Jesus as Lord of your life

4-6 – Luke is telling us that the prophecy of Isaiah 750 years earlier refers to John the B.

John was *the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*

Prepare your heart for the Savior

Get rid of the obstacles of sin, rebellion, and unbelief in your life (*crooked paths, high mountains, rough places*) – not by an act of your will, but through repentance

Repentance is the highway that cuts through the obstacles of your heart, to give Jesus full access to your soul

It’s the key that unlocks the salvation and blessing of God in your life

For some of you, that means you’re going to have to . . .

• **Get off your high horse** (v7)

John didn’t waste any time getting at the issue of pride

You brood of vipers (7) – you slithering hypocrites

What a way to start a message huh?

That’s right up there in the “Top 10 Ways to Win Friends/Influence People”

Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (7b)

What are you doing here? Your heart’s not right; You’re not sincere about this

You’re not here to repent and be baptized

You’re here to see the show; Check out the spectacle; To be seen by the community

To build your business; To find something wrong

They were proud, hard of heart, and John had no patience for it

Some of you are in that boat

You’re proud – you don’t want to *see* your sin, you don’t want to *admit* your sin, and you certainly don’t want to *reveal* your sin

In fact, you don’t even think you have any sin

You don’t get it; You’re living in denial land

Charles Spurgeon was England’s best known preacher in the second half of the 19th cent.

At one point in his ministry – preaching on repentance week after week after week

One Sunday a woman came up to him after the service and ask him when he was going to stop preaching on repentance

He replied – when *you* finally get it

Believer or unbeliever – some of you need to get off your high horse, stop acting like you have nothing wrong, and *repent* of your sins

Others of you need to . . .

• **Stop making excuses** (v8)

John’s like don’t even think about giving me the *Abraham-is-my-father* excuse

For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham (8b)

Don’t get all high and mighty on me

There’s no special treatment just because of your lineage

Stones will work just as well in Potter’s hands

It doesn’t matter . . .

How good your family is

If you’ve been a Christian for 40 years and know the Bible by heart

If you think your life is 99% perfect

None of that excuses your sin or gets you off the hook

But oh how we try – Christians are professionals at rationalizing sin

I know it doesn’t look good, but it’s not *that* big of a deal (buzzer)

I know it’s bad to look at that magazine/movie, but it could be worse (buzzer)

I know I party on the weekend, but at least I go to church

I know I spend ridiculous amounts of \$\$ on myself, but I also give a lot to the church

I know I hang out with the wrong crowd, but at least I go to youth group

I don’t care if you’re friends with the Pope and make regular pilgrimages to Jerusalem

As if either of those things would help

Stop making excuses and repent of your sins

• **Wake up to the consequences** (v9)

9 – using a word picture to say you’d better wake up to your sin, and soon

Because if you don't, you will suffer terrible consequences for all eternity
I'm *not* talking to those of you who are *struggling* with your sin . . .

I'm talking to those of you who *aren't*
I'm *not* talking about those of you who *want* to be holy . . .
I'm talking about those of you who could care *less*
I'm *not* talking about those of you who sin and regret it
I'm talking about those of you who sin and *don't*

If that's you, you need to wake up – watch this
(**Video** – *Wake Up* from Virtual Reality vol. 9)
Wake up to the consequences of your sin . . .
And repent

And then . . .

Walk your talk (v 10-14)

That's what John the Baptist means when he says in v8 –
Bear fruits in keeping with repentance – walk your talk
Put your commitment into action – turn from your sin and strive for holiness
In your walk with Christ, you should either be struggling with sin or striving for holiness,
all the time – that's walking your talk
After saying in v9 that terrible consequences are certain if something doesn't change, the
crowds ask – *What then shall we do?* (10)
John illustrates 4 principles in v10-14, to help us walk our talk of repentance

• Give generously to those in need (v11)

Read v10-11
Want to walk your talk?; Want to bear fruit in keeping with your repentance?
Give generously of what you have, to those in need
I'm not talking about your regular giving here, your tithe; Neither is John
I'm talking about giving generously as you are able, over and above your tithe, to those
less fortunate
We do that as a church through our Compassion Fund (story of Darrell's encounter)

About 2 months ago (8/06) . . .

Woman, husband, driving from Idaho to Miss, no money for food, gas; Needed tires
Listened to service, \$300, Heard the gospel
Love those opp's; Many more in our church and community
Give generously to those in need

• Be honest in all you do (v12-13)

Tax collectors for the government in Rome were in a position to collect more money than
they were supposed to, and pocket the difference
The people didn't know how much they were supposed to collect, and Rome wouldn't
know the difference if they collected more
So they took advantage of the situation and made some money on the side
They were routinely dishonest

Want to walk your talk? Be honest in all you do
Show integrity in your dealings with others
Take the high road, even when the low road is faster or easier

Don't cheat, even if no one will ever know – God knows
And don't rationalize your dishonesty just because you're dealing with a large company
– “they can afford it”

Be honest in *all* you do, with everyone you deal with – large and small alike

• Treat people right (v14)

Don't abuse your authority, your position, your power; Read v14
Almost every one of us finds our self in a position of authority/power at some point in life
There's the playground bully – in authority over the weaker kids
The soldier over those conquered
The parent over their kids; Executive over his employees
Coach over his players; Husband over his wife
Anybody who has an advantage over someone else

Those are positions of authority

Some given, some taken; Some short-term, some long
All of them carry a responsibility to treat people right

Don't abuse your authority, or power, or position
Be fair with people; Show them respect; Go out of your way for them
Above and beyond the call of duty

That's what it means to walk your talk of repentance

• Be content with what you have (v14)

14 – *be content with your wages*

Remember story problems in math?

If Jane traveled NE at 60 mph, and John traveled W at 35 miles per hour, how long
would it take them to intersect assuming they were 363 miles apart to start with?
You know, real life stuff and all☺

1 Tim 6:6 – There is great gain in godliness with contentment

Expressed in a formula . . . **Godliness + Contentment = Great Gain**

But if your life is the story problem, and someone didn't have the answer in the back of
the Book, what formula would they come up with?

Would it be . . . **Godliness + Great gain = Contentment**

Because you strive first and foremost for more money and more stuff
Throw in a little godliness to ease your conscience

Maybe give a little to the Lord when you have a good week or something
And hope it all adds up to contentment?

Would that be the formula for your life's story problem?

If so, let me clue you in to something

The more gain you pursue, the less contentment you have, no matter how godly you act

Take an inventory of your work patterns, goals, spending patterns, and giving

And if it doesn't add up – make whatever changes are necessary so that you can bear
fruit in keeping with your repentance

John urged his followers to be baptized to show their repentance/commitment to walk
their talk

Jesus urges us to be baptized to show our salvation and identity as a child of God

But some people want to be baptized apart from any commitment to walk their talk
It's a formality for them; A check off; The thing to do
They think it somehow saves them or is part of a hocus-pocus recipe to gain God's
favor or blessing
It's not – it's not necessary for salvation nor is it an automatic means of being blessed
Baptism is God's way to publicly identify yourself with Jesus as your Savior and Lord

On the other hand, many of you have given your life to the Lord, but don't *want* to be
baptized . . .
You don't want to get your hair wet
You think your faith should be a private thing
It's a personal thing, but it's never meant to be private and kept to yourself
You're scared to stand up in front of people
God will help you
You don't want your friends to think you've gone off the deep end
Who cares what they think – don't be ashamed of Jesus
You don't think you're good enough
And you're right; You never will be
But it's not about you; It's about Him – to make him look good

There's an opp for you to be baptized right here in the auditorium **Oct 29th**
You've seen the brochure in your bulletin
There's also a message on baptism available for free this morning at the Resource
Ministry in the lobby – to help answer your questions from the Bible
Finally, if you want to be baptized Oct 29th, you need to **pick up a Baptism Packet** at
the Info table – you'll find a short Bible study in that, as well as some other resources
to help you understand what you're doing, and why

But whether you've been baptized or not –
Get off your high horse; Stop making excuses; Wake up to the consequences of your
sins . . . and repent
When you do, walk your talk