

KINGDOM *of* HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Matthew 3:1-12

(Sermon from Sunday 19 March 2023, Richard van Lieshout)

1. **Information**

a) Read the passage, perhaps twice using two different versions

b) Fill in any info that didn't make it into the sermon.

- There is additional information in the CG guide from **page 28-31**.
- In particular you may want to highlight the following points, which were not expressed in the sermon:
 - i. On the importance of the figure of John the Baptist:
 - All four Gospel writers include the story of John 'preparing the way' for Jesus - so it must be important!
 - **To get a sense of this you could read Matt 11:11-15** (I quote this in the sermon, but only to make the link between John & Elijah. I don't highlight John's importance).
 - **Note: don't go into detail in that passage** - we'll get there! The point is to highlight the importance of John, which we often gloss over. Typically, in preaching this passage, we'll go straight to Jesus' baptism and temptations, and miss the significance of John. This is partly why I structured the series this way, so that we can fully appreciate John!
 - ii. On 'repentance':
 - In the sermon I mention the fact that I spent a whole sermon on the word 'repent' in October 2021 (you can find that [here](#)). In this sermon, I do spend some time on the word 'repent', but more in a metaphorical sense.
 - With your group, **you could attempt a more theological definition**, using the notes for verse 2 (pg 29), and v8-10 (pg 31)
 - iii. On John's diet (!!)
 - **For a fascinating take on John's diet of locusts and honey**, check out [this article](#).
 - iv. On the Pharisees and Sadducees
 - **You could spend some time introducing these groups (its the first time they appear in Matthew) using the notes for v7 (pg 30).**
 - I wouldn't advise spending too much time here, we'll meet these okes again and spend some more time on them.
 - v. On baptism with the 'Holy Spirit and fire' (v11)
 - I don't go into this in the sermon, as it's a bit of can of worms. If you do decide to go into it, please do NOT go down the road of two separate baptisms. This is clearly one baptism, with the idea of the Spirit purifying (as per the notes).
- f) Answer any questions the group might have**

2. Activation

a) Urgency

- In my prayer time at the end of the sermon I led people in a prayer where I first expressed the sense of urgency/immanency that is very vivid in John's message to the religious leaders ie:
 - *"**Even now** the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (v10)*
 - *"His winnowing fork **is in his hand**, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (v12)*
- Note how these both indicate present tense!
- Thus while we still await 'The Day of the Lord' (referred to in the sermon, Malachi 4:1-6), the verdict leading to the state of judgment is pronounced **now**, based on acceptance of Jesus.
- From the CG notes:
 - 'As the kingdom message is preached, those who reject it are already marked out for judgment, even though the full force has not yet been felt' (pg 31)
- **I would 'activate' this component, ie really try your best to ensure the group understands the need to decide now.**
- In the week of my prep I received an email article (part of a weekly newsletter I subscribe to) which highlights this in a great way. It's a great article that you might want to share.

b) Application

- At the end of the sermon I pushed the boundaries of repentance outward from simple belief in Jesus, to some of the other struggles we have to fully 'cross over the Jordan' (the metaphor for repentance developed in the sermon).
- ***It would be really helpful to activate this, and I would advise you prioritise this and allow time for it!***

3. Implementation

- The 'transformation equation' can similarly be described as:
 - i. What? (Information)
 - ii. So what? (Activation)
 - iii. **Now what? (Implementation)**
- This third step is crucial! Think about the answer to the question '**Now what?**' as it relates to the immanent call to repent, and the extended idea of fully 'crossing the Jordan'.
- List some things you will do as a group to implement this teaching in your life.