

The Forerunner's Work

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Date: 02 March 2025

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[0 : 00] Breaking into the next chapter. To this point, we've read of the announcement of John the Baptist's birth.

We've read of the announcement to Mary of the Messiah's birth. We've read of how John the Baptist was born.

And all that went into that. And the prophecy that came out of John the Baptist after he was able to speak again. We have read of how Jesus is born.

And we've read how he grew up. And how he learned. He was, first of all, presented in the temple. And then came back to the temple to learn. And now we have jumped some 18 years or so.

Oh no. Yes, 18 years or so. Eight years. You do the math. I'm not thinking well. We've jumped to the time that John the Baptist is about 30.

[1 : 11] In that area. And we're going to see John the Baptist come on the scene. And we're going to see that that is a mercy. I want you to watch for how the Jews have this totally wrong thinking.

And in his grace, God has sent a forerunner to begin to change the people's minds so that they hear the gospel.

We're going to look at Luke chapter 3. Please follow along as I read the first 20 verses. In the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar.

Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea. And Herod being tetrarch of Galilee. And his brother Philip, tetrarch of the region of Iteria and Trachonitis.

And Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene. During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas. The word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

[2 : 19] And he went into all the region around the Jordan. Proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare the way of the Lord. Make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled.

And every mountain and hill shall be made low. And the crooked shall become straight. And the rough places shall become level ways. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him. You brood of vipers. Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come. Bearing fruits and keeping.

Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves. We have Abraham as our father. For I tell you God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

[3 : 24] Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. And the crowds asked him.

What then shall we do? And he answered. Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none. And whoever has food is to do likewise.

Tax collectors also came to be baptized. And he said to him. And said to him. Teacher what shall we do? And he said to them. Collect no more than you are authorized to do.

Soldiers also asked him. And we. What shall we do? And he said to them. Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation. And be content with your wages.

As the people were in expectation. And all were questioning in their hearts concerning John. Whether he might be the Christ. John answered them all saying. I baptize you with water.

[4 : 26] But he who is mightier than I is coming. The strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

And fire. Fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand. To cleanse his threshing floor. And to gather the wheat into his barn. But the chaff. He will burn with unquenchable fire.

So with many other exhortations. He preached good news to the people. But Herod the Tetrarch. Who had been reproved by him for Herodias.

His brother's wife. And for all the evil things that Herod had done. Added this to them all. That he locked up John. In prison. Let's pray.

Father. I thank you for your grace. It's evident here. Even as you sent John. To speak before. Even the Messiah is appearing. In public. Thank you for the grace.

[5 : 26] And the mercy that God has shown. In John's message. He was a fiery preacher. But he was a gift of God. To Israel. And even to us.

Thank you for the gracious ways. In fiery sermons. That he preached. I pray that you would help us. To see. The message that he.

Shared. For that time. And how it relates to us. And how it can instruct us. I pray that you would be with us. May your spirit give us understanding. In your word.

Help me as I share. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. This is a long passage. And there's a sense in which we could. Break this up into different things.

And that would be fine. And preachers do do that. But. If you took note in the reading. We got. A glimpse. Of the whole of John's life.

[6 : 22] I believe that Luke. As he's writing this. Is. Touching on John. Sharing what he did. Sharing. The encapsulation of his life. So that it could be.

For our understanding. Of how he prepared. For the Messiah. And how his ministry was. A preparation. For the work of the Messiah. And so. That's why I've chosen. To do all 20 verses. In one shot. I want us to see. God's grace. To his people. Through the life. Of John the Baptist. And Luke. As he begins. He begins sharing.

The situation. Of that time. And he names off. All these kings. Tiberius Caesar. He was the ruler. Of the empire. Under him. Was Pontius Pilate.

There's a whole story. About how Pontius Pilate. Got. His title. But. We don't have time. For that today. But. Just know. That Pontius Pilate. Was somebody.

[7 : 20] That nobody really liked. In fact. All these people. With the exception. Of Licinius. We. We don't know. A lot about Licinius. But the rest of them. They were not liked.

They were awful people. They were awful. In their rule. The one. Herod. The Tetrarch. He tried. To be kind of. Decent. To people. But in the end. He was awful. To the people of Israel. Also. They were awful rulers. And this kind of situation.

Among. Along with the. 400 years. Since Israel. Had been brought back. To the land. Remember. They had sinned. And they'd been. Taken into captivity.

70 years went by. They were brought back. From captivity. But they were in the land. 400 years. Now. 430 years. Since they've been brought back. Into the land.

[8 : 18] And in that time. They had not seen. A son of David. To be king over Israel. They had always been. Ruled by other people. And those people.

Were generally. Awful. There were very few. If any. Good rulers. In those 400 year time. And here. We come to a situation.

Where that continues. They're under. Awful rulers. And that. Those awful rulers. Along with the 400 years. Of awful rulers.

Have developed. In the Jews. This mindset. Of the kind of Messiah. That they're looking for. They want. And it's evident. If you read through the Gospels. You'll see.

They were looking. For a Messiah. That was going to throw off. The Romans. And that would have taken care of. Tiberius. And Pilate. And in a very.

[9 : 13] Real sense. Also. The other three. That are mentioned. And they. So they looked for a Messiah. Who would be a son of David. Who come in. And he would become. Begin to become famous.

And he would draw people to himself. And people would be all excited. And they'd be whipped up into a frenzy. And this Messiah would then say. It's time to throw off the Romans. And he would gather people.

To be. In along behind him. In his hosts. In his army. And he would go. To start in Jerusalem. And he would throw off the rulers. And he'd make his way. Into Rome.

And he would throw off the rulers. And the. The day. Throne of David. Be reset in Jerusalem. And he would take that throne. And there would be no Caesar in Rome.

There would be. The king of Israel. In Jerusalem. And from that spot. That king. In Jerusalem. Would rule the world. And would do it. In righteousness. And peace.

[10:07] And his right hand men. Would be the Jews. And they would be. There. And they'd be the. Most important in the realm. Beside the king. That's the kind of Messiah. That they were looking for.

That's what they wanted. They were looking for someone. To bring them back. To their glory. To bring them back. To some sort of prominence. Something like what Solomon was. But better. But they had a need. They had grown blind to. A couple thousand years. Of sacrificial system. And the bringing of animals. And the confessing of sin. On the head of that animals. And the slitting of the throat. Had turned simply to ceremony. To works. To something to be done. And then get on with your life. Done to be acceptable before God. And then get on with your life.

[11:07] Live the way you wanted. And all through scripture. All through the gospels. We see scribes and Pharisees. And those. Who had exactly done that. They'd set up all these rules.

But they didn't live by them. They were simply looking for a Messiah. Who was going to help them. Be who they wanted. To be. And who they wanted.

Is the kind of Messiah for them. So God in his grace. Does not give. His word. To Tiberius. To Pontius Pilate. To Herod.

Or to any other. Of the guys there. He does not go to a city. And give his word. He has called this man. He's prophesied of this man.

He has sent this man. And this man has been growing up. In the desert. For 30 years now. And while he's in the desert. God comes to him. And tells him to go. He gives him the word of God.

[12:08] And he went into all the region. And God having called him. He went into all the region. Around the Jordan. Now. It is a wilderness area.

Where John went. John didn't go to Jerusalem. John didn't go to Canaan of Galilee. He didn't go to any of the cities. Necessarily. Of the area.

Of the country. Of the nation. Of Israel. He went to the wilderness area. He went down along the Jordan. The Jordan. Dips down real sharp.

And it's a very. If you look at it on a map. It's the squiggliest river. I have ever seen. And he went down into that area. He went up and down.

The sides of the Jordan. Out in the wilderness. Preaching the word of God. And it's interesting. People knew. There was supposed to be a Messiah coming.

[13:03] And they knew he was supposed to be preceded. By a forerunner. And so. The Jews to this point. Had already began having the practice. Of when they had the Passover.

They would set an extra empty plate. Who was that for? That was for Elijah. Who is he? He's. He's the forerunner. He's the one that Malachi talked about. He's the one that was spoken of.

Even in Isaiah. Not the Messiah. But the forerunner to the Messiah. And so they were looking for a forerunner. And John goes out and begins to preach. And Luke doesn't talk about it.

But he's a strange fellow. He's wearing a shirt of camel hair. With a leather belt around. And he loves to eat locusts and wild honey.

Boy that would get your interest up. I would think. Hmm. Hey guys. You want to go see a nut? Let's go out into the wilderness. I've heard this guy in camel hair.

[14:01] Is out there preaching. Let's go see what this is about. And some would have even known that. Hey. This. This. He sounds just like Elijah. Maybe this is the forerunner.

And so he's preaching in that area. And people are coming out to him. And they're listening to him preach. And we'll get into his instruction in just a minute.

But they're actually following some of his instruction. And it says in scripture. That he was to proclaim a baptism of repentance.

For the forgiveness of sins. A baptism of repentance. For the forgiveness of sins. Now. This is what's called a proselyte baptism.

A proselyte baptism. It was strange. It wasn't strange to the Jews. But it's strange what John was doing with it. A proselyte baptism was something that the Jews did.

[14:59] Whenever a Gentile decided he wanted to become part of the nation of Israel. Gentiles are unclean. They're dogs. In the Jews mind.

And before they could come. Before they could even be circumcised. They would have to have this washing. They would be baptized. They'd be dipped down in the water.

It would be ceremonial. But it was the sense that it was cleansing the filth of Gentileness from them. That was proselyte baptism that they were used to.

And so here's John. He's out in the wilderness. And he has not invited Gentiles to him. It's the Jews that he's talking to.

And he's telling them they need to be baptized. To repentance. For the forgiveness of sins. He was pointing to them.

[16:00] That it's not just the Gentiles that are unclean. You Jews are unclean. He's ushering in a new thinking.

The new era of what Christ would do. Now this is not believers baptism. Okay. This is something that he was preaching that pointed to forgiveness and cleansing of sin.

But it was not the believers baptism. People who were saved here after Christ were baptized. It says in the book of Acts.

So this baptism does not point to what Christ has done for them. Or in their case looking forward to what he would do. This points to the fact that forgiveness of sins required that we turn from our sins. That's the big theme of what John is preaching. This baptism pointed to the fact that forgiveness of sin required that we turn from our sins.

[17:20] As I mentioned earlier, Israel had grown cold spiritually. And like I said, they had gotten to where they were living in this religious system with no thought of changing their lives.

Their whole soul standing was their family heritage. I'm of the son. I'm a son of Abraham.

Abraham. That's in just a minute. We'll look at what he preached. He was reminding them that that's what they claimed. And that was not worth anything in God's eyes as far as dealing with their sin.

And so Israel had grown cold. God in his mercy has sent this forerunner to begin preparing the way for the way of the Lord.

Luke. Luke. This is not what John says. This is what Luke says about John. Remember, Luke has become familiar with the last third of the book of Isaiah.

[18:33] And how there would be the consolation of Israel. And how he would come and would meet the need of his people. And so Luke is sharing that John is coming and his message is preparing the way for the Messiah.

And it's interesting. Let me read the prophecy again. He quotes the prophet Isaiah. He says, You know, if you look at the other gospels.

They quote Isaiah 40 verse 3. The voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare the way of the Lord. Make his paths straight.

But it's interesting. Luke. The references are not going to make sense here. But let me try to make sure you understand. Luke.

The other gospels quote Isaiah 40 verse 3. Luke quotes Isaiah verses 3 through 5.

[20:03] Why? Because he wants to make sure that the people he's writing to sees what God has prophesied about John.

And the message that would be coming from the true Messiah. And that's essentially what is verse 6 in our text.

Verse 5 in Isaiah 40 verse 5. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Luke shows that John is preparing the way for all nations to see the salvation of God.

Can you imagine the joy that would bring you? If as a Gentile you were hearing the word of God in all your life you had heard. There's no way you could ever know God.

God has no love or no desire for you. God will cast you out of darkness and there is no hope. And that's the way you had lived. And so you had not given God one second thought.

[21:09] But Luke says I'm going to read more. Luke as a Gentile saying I'm a Gentile. And I find hope in Isaiah 40 verse 5.

God is not just sending salvation to the Jews. He's sending salvation to the ends of the world. He's opening it up.

He's giving them hope. So God is preparing a way for all the nations to see.

So, so far all we've looked at is what Luke has said about John. And even quoted prophecies about John.

Now, we're going to get now examples of what John said. These are summations of a year, year and a half's worth of preaching. This is not all the messages.

[22 : 13] He didn't rotely just repeat these words. But this is the gist of what John preached for a year and a half. And he's going to give us some examples here.

Verses 7 through 9. In verses 7 through 9, it is what he said to the crowds. He said, therefore, to the crowds that came out to be baptized.

Reminding you, who are the crowds? They're not Gentiles. They're Jews. He said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him. You brood of vipers who warned you to flee from the wrath to come.

Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. Let me just stop there. So he is preaching to the Jews and telling the Jews on a regular basis.

Who taught you to come out? You're people who are deceptive. Like that little viper in that area that used to lie under the bushes and would look like a twig.

[23 : 15] Until you reach down to grab it. Turn around and bite you. Kill you. These people were deceptive. Dangerous people. Who thought that because they are of the seed of Abraham, they were something.

They were something special in God's eyes. That they had special privileges and special blessings. And they were blessed by God. But not in the way they were thinking. And he's telling these Jews, you folks need to realize that you cannot.

Let me finish reading this. And do not begin to say to yourselves, we have Abraham as our father. For I tell you that God is able of these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

Abraham. These people were saying, we're Jews. I'm of the seed of Abraham. Maybe you haven't heard that song. It's very old.

And that's what they trusted in. And he's saying, it doesn't work like that. Yes, the nation was blessed because they are of the seed of Abraham.

[24 : 22] But the Messiah was not coming just to reestablish the nation. The Messiah was coming to deal with sin. And they needed to start having their mind changed in that direction.

Not restore glory, but save the lost. Was what the Messiah was coming to do. And he's saying, you need to see that it's not who you are by virtue of birth.

You need to see that you are a sinner. You are unclean. That baptism was to show them they need it.

Now we don't wash away sins with baptism. We give testimony to the work that God has done. This baptism pointed to the fact that they were filthy sinners. And they needed their sins dealt with.

And so he's telling them, you need to be people who do that. You need to realize that you're dirty. And you need to turn from the ways you are going to follow the Lord.

[25 : 31] He says, in preaching that, that they need to turn. And they were trusting in who they were.

But John goes on to mention, every tree therefore, oh, let me back up. 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.

Now there are two or three different interpretations of this parable. I'm just going to give you mine. It's correct. So don't worry about it. No. Don't ever think that.

Just making sure you're paying attention. All of the interpretations are within proper understanding of scripture. Okay. Let me say that and correct it. My picture here is of a lumberjack.

And I don't know why he would do it this way, but just go with me. Okay. As a lumberjack goes out into the woods and looks through the trees, he's looking around and he comes to this tree.

[26 : 38] And he's beginning to be a bit suspicious about it. And he takes his axe that he's had on his shoulder and he rests it at the foot of the tree. And he backs up and he's looking.

Are there dead branches? Does this tree bear fruit? And he's laid that axe there while he's examining what's going on with that tree. And the decision will be made.

Does he pick that axe up? Say, that's enough of you. We're going to get rid of you. There's no fruit. There's dead branches. You're not growing in the way you need to grow.

And so John, as he's preaching, is telling these people, God is looking at you. And he's looking for fruit. He's looking to see whether you're the kind of people who are truly following him or just wanting him to serve you for your ends, for your means.

And so he warns them. Every tree, therefore, that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Cut down.

[27 : 48] There's judgment coming. Well, in the course of things, as John preaches, Luke has given us a picture of what he preached to people.

There's judgment. You are unclean. You must bear fruit of repentance. And so now he's given that picture of what John preached. Next, he will give us a picture of how some responded.

He's going to teach us by these responses what real repentance is. And so Luke gives this generic situation that would happen when John preached.

He would preach to the crowd. And the crowd would sometimes, hopefully always, but whatever, would respond with, what am I supposed to do?

And John would give generic positive answers here. Generic positive answers.

[28 : 55] Basically coming down to love your neighbor as yourself. Saying if you have two, we'll call them t-shirts, for the ease of what we understand.

If you have two t-shirts and there's a guy running around here naked, give him your shirt, extra shirt. Didn't tell him to take his shirt off that he has and give it to him. Then there'd just be another naked person.

But if you have an extra shirt, give him his shirt. And then he goes in another positive command. If you see people who are hungry, they're starving. And there's no qualification here.

If you see people who are starving and you have food, doesn't say you have a bunch of food, but you have food, give it to them. Share. Endeavor to meet their need.

So in John's preaching, as people were coming, they were asking these questions and John would give a positive response. And then he uses two particular illustrations of two particular people that are where negative commands are given.

[30 : 02] He says the publican or tax collector, they said, what do we do? The idea being, if I was to be repentant, what would it look like?

That's what this is getting down to, both the positive and the negative. If I was to be repentant, what would it look like? And so as Luke gives us the picture of what John is preaching, he's saying, well, maybe a tax collector would come and he would say, what would this look like?

And John would answer back something along the lines of collect no more than you're authorized to do. Now, the understanding was Rome would empower these people to be tax collectors and they just turned their eyes at that point.

And the tax collectors would then say, okay, they told me I had to tax everybody's income at 8%. But you know, I really want that boat and that lake house.

So, it's 12% for everybody. And Rome had already figured in the percentage that they could ask and it'd be a salary also to them.

[31 : 11] John is not talking about taking away their salary. He's talking about being fair, treating your neighbor as you would have them treat you. You stop treating them as just people to be robbed.

And same thing with soldiers. Soldiers were known because they carried swords and not everybody carried swords. You know, the typical old movie, somebody comes in with a gun or a sword and say, it'd be a tough thing for something to happen to this establishment you have here.

And you know, you can tell it's this veiled threat that if you don't give them money, then they're going to hurt you. And that's what the soldiers would do. They'd devise ways to make people feel like they had to give them money and the Roman government provided for them a salary and even provided for them to have ways to stay in people's houses and different things like this.

And they said, what would repentance look like to be? And they says, stop extorting people and be content with what you're given.

And so, here is John. Luke is given a picture of what John preaches. And what John is preaching is repentance from sin and trusting in the coming Messiah.

[32 : 37] But in preparation for that Messiah, he's not so much talking about the Messiah so much. He may at times, but the illustrations that John gives here are illustrations to show that we're filthy people and we need to turn from our sin and we're stuck.

He's proving the point to the Jews that they need the kind of Messiah that's coming, not the kind of Messiah they want. And it was important for them to see that the Messiah that's coming was coming to die for their sins.

Well, the preaching of John was impressive. I mean, he didn't care who he talked to. We'll see at the end that he certainly doesn't care who he talks to.

He's going to say the word right and he's going to require what God calls him to ask people to be required. He's not afraid of anyone. And people are just amazed at this guy.

He's going around here telling soldiers what to do. He's going around here telling the publicans what to do. He's going around telling scribes and Pharisees what to do. I mean, this guy is bold.

[33 : 52] And he speaks with authority. I wonder if he's the Messiah. And that was the thing that was beginning to whisper around.

And so John sets the record straight about himself and the Messiah. He says, I'm not the Christ. They wondered if he was. Do you think it was any bit of temptation at that point to want to be quiet? I don't think it really was for John. But it has been for me at times. God gives me something to say. God allows me to do anything and just put yourself in that situation. It doesn't have to be preaching. I mean, you clean the best window in the world. Or you clean the window the best way in the world. Or whatever you do, is there ever a... I'm not talking about being glad for your work. I'm not talking about being glad for being able to do a good job.

[35 : 02] I'm talking about taking credit for something that God gifts you to be able to do. John could have fallen into this. It's something that we can fall into very easily. We need to be careful to be people who give God the glory he deserves and do not take to ourselves that which belongs to God, which is something it's very easy for us to do.

So he says, I'm not the Christ. And then he gives this illustration that shows just how far below Christ he is.

It was normal in those days if people and most of what I read talked about teachers. If like a scribe or a Pharisee was a teacher and he had students who were learning, those students would take on the responsibility of doing anything that a slave would do.

Anything that the scribe or the Pharisee or the teacher asked them they could do that. But there was one thing that they could never, and it was written into the contract, that they could never be asked was to take their teacher's shoes off.

I see that as a huge blessing. You know, I've had some great teachers don't know if I'd want to take the shoes off from any of them. That job was left to the lowest slave.

[36 : 32] the lowest slave of the house, the one who had the lowest rank, the most nothing slave of the house, it was their responsibility to unclasp the strap of a person's sandal.

And John is saying, you see the rank between the teacher or the master and the slave who could take shoes off them slant shoes off masters.

Let me get over here. John says, I'm here. Now, he's not so much saying so much about who he is. He's trying to paint a picture that it is how great Christ is.

You're comparing me to Christ, I'm nothing like Christ. I'm not anything worthy like Christ. The difference between me and Christ is beyond human structure in the sense of what we would normally think of.

What we would think of as a person who was low enough to undo sandals, when you compare that person to the master, I am still so far below Christ, immeasurably below Christ.

[37 : 49] you're going to have a Messiah who is so exalted, so amazing. Who is he? He's the God man. That's, he doesn't spell it out, maybe times he did, but he doesn't spell it out in Luke's example.

I'm so far below him. I am unfathomably lower in rank than Christ. What you can expect from Christ, I baptize with water, but no, not Christ.

He baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire. And he will rightly separate the wheat and the chaff and reward each accordingly.

Now, you know what they're talking about. People would harvest their wheat, still be on the stalk, bring it in in the sheaves, they bring it into a threshing floor, the stalks of wheat with the heads of grain still in them, they'd lay them all out, they'd run an ox over it, and he had what was called a threshing sledge, and they would go back and forth and back and forth over that wheat.

And the purpose of that was to get the kernels knocked off from the long stalks of wheat. And they could easily pick up with a fork the long stalks of wheat, wheat, but if you've ever had real wheat in your hand, you know that it comes covered with this little flaky stuff, it's called chaff, and it's very dangerous, it's dangerous because it's extremely flammable.

[39 : 32] So, that's not why they did this, but you'll see why it's important in a minute, but they would bring this wheat and they would thresh it, and they'd pick the stalks out, but they had this chaff in it, and they didn't want the chaff, nobody wants to chew on chaff, and so to separate it, they'd take this fork and grab a fork shovel-like thing, and throw the wheat up into the air, and the wind would just be enough to blow the chaff to the side, and the wheat would just fall down, and be able to separate them this way.

It was a way of judging what is good stuff, and what is evil stuff. And Christ would come, and it says he will be able to deal with people so that he knows who is his and who is not.

Whatever they profess, doesn't matter what they profess, who is his and who is not, and he will separate them, and John says the chaff will be burned with unquenchable fire.

Once you start chaff on fire, it just is gone. Burns terribly hot, but very quickly. Saying that there's judgment coming.

He's hinting that we want to be people who are wheat. We want to be those who are producing fruit. Well, as we sum up John's life, Luke goes on to mention that John is faithful to the end of his calling.

[41 : 04] in verses 18 to 20. He's faithful to keep preaching. He's faithful even though it cost him his life. We mentioned Herod the Tetrarch.

That was Herod Antipas that was being referred to. As it mentions towards the end of the chapter, or it doesn't mention his name, but that's who he is.

Herod was one of the sons of Herod the Great, and he'd been made part ruler of the land of Israel, and he went to Rome at one point and come back by and stopped at another man's house named Herod.

And while he was there, he had a fling with that Herod's wife, who happened to be his niece, if I remember rightly.

And they conspired together and said, you divorce your mate and I'll divorce my mate, because this Herod's wife coming to Herod Antipas was now going to be son who she hoped, or not son, wife of a king.

[42 : 23] And so here this happened, and John in his faithfulness to God and his word, comes to Herod and says, you can't have her. By law, you've broken a marriage and taken a woman as your wife who was another man's.

This woman is also a close relative of yours. You cannot have her. And because of that, John was put in prison. John was put in prison.

What do you do if it costs you to serve Christ? Christ? We should serve Christ no matter the cost. Your strength to keep true is not in yourself, but in seeing who Christ is and what he's done for you. In your work, stand strong in the instruction and command of the Lord.

Obey him, and do not depend on your strength, but depend on his in the midst of suffering. John was faithful to the end. You know, and I thought about that, and I thought, you know I failed at that already.

[43 : 37] What do you do if you fail? You think like Peter. Peter didn't stand true. What did he have to do? He had to confess and repent, seek Christ.

And that's what we do in any of our sin. But if we fail to stand for Christ, no matter the cost, when we do, we confess and repent.

Well, Christian, one of the things I really, really want you to see out of this is that repentance, and we're talking about what John preached, but the same thing is true.

It's such a great example of what true repentance is. repentance is part of our coming to Christ. It's not only part of our coming to Christ, but it's part of our everyday life.

And so knowing what repentance is is important. Repentance is where when we sin, we confess that sin and then turn away from it.

[44 : 48] And we desire to do what God commands. repentance. The picture that Luke gives of John's preaching, when he said to the crowds, when they asked what repentance looks like, he says meeting the need in food and clothing.

When the soldiers and the tax collectors said what does repentance look like, he says it is not taking what is not yours and not extorting people.

What it looks like in all these areas is just getting back to we read the Ten Commandments today. I was very glad for that and how it worked out. Repentance is saying this is what God's law says.

I've been breaking this. I want to go back to doing what God's law says. And so repentance is an important part of our life. not only when we're saved.

See, these people, they made light of that kind of stuff. They said, oh, I'm a son of Abraham. Instead of saying, I'm a sinner. I've done wrong.

[46 : 04] I need now to confess that and forsake that and turn back to doing what is right. And so we do that in coming to Christ.

We do that in our everyday life. When we fall into sin, it is simply the process then that we are to confess that sin and forsake that sin and rest in the work of Christ.

So I encourage you to make that part of your regular exercise, of your regular life, confessing sin and turning from it. God's and I do want to mention this and I just want to remind you that John prepared the way for the Messiah.

Our Messiah has come. What he was prophesying, we have. Are you spreading the good news of the Messiah like John did of the Messiah that was coming?

Are you telling people that your greatest need is met in the Messiah? And friend, if you're here and you don't know Christ, you haven't accepted his payment for your sins, John was faithful to point out in his preaching that there's coming a day of judgment.

[47 : 21] Remember we talked about the fire, judgment to come. Christ will separate the wheat, those who trust him for salvation, evidenced by their desire to serve him, from the chaff, those who do not trust him, or pretend to trust him but have no change of heart, that shows that they don't really desire to serve him.

I want you to know that if you have not chosen to trust Christ and want to do what he commands, John says the saved will go into everlasting blessedness and the lost will go to judgment of everlasting fire.

There's a seriousness about dealing with your soul before God. Have you turned from your sin to trust his work for you? Is your claim to be trusting Christ being evidenced by a life that wants to do what he commands?

I encourage you to examine your heart in relation to that. Let's pray. Thank you Father for this picture of several things.

Picture of repentance. Picture of a man who was willing to serve you no matter what. The opening up of showing that as people looked for the wrong kind of Messiah, Christ in his mercy sent the forerunner to begin to change their minds and show them that they needed a savior who would pay for their sins.

[48 : 54] I pray that you would work in our hearts that we would be people who understand and practice true repentance. Help us to be people who love and serve you with all of our hearts and Lord any who don't know you're here today that they would come to know Christ as savior.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.