
“He Chose A Messenger”

Mark 1:1-9

“The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 It is written in Isaiah the prophet: ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way-- 3 a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

4 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And this was his message: ‘After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’”

Mark 1:1-9 (NIV)

Sermon:

Needed: A table with all kinds of tools on it.

(Looking over the tools on the table). Hmm...I wonder which tools I should use? (Picking up each one and looking pensively at them). I wonder if this one will work? Or how about this one? Hmm...maybe this one.

This is so hard! I can't decide which tool to use! If I were building a house, I'd call Bob Vila. If I were building some furniture, I'd call Norm Abram. But they won't do. I need something more, something more *radical*! I suppose I could call Ty Pennington, but even an extreme makeover—home edition won't be enough.

What am I doing? I'm trying to figure out which tools are needed for the most radical makeover that can ever occur—the makeover of the heart. Anyone can redo a house, a car, or a building. Doctors and plastic surgeons can redo virtually any part of your body and make you look different and feel beautiful.

But what does one use for the most needed radical makeover we can experience?

Hmmmm...maybe this axe. You know, John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees they needed an axe. Hmmmm...what do we need? (Exasperated) Lord, show me!

Hidden Voice: ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way-- 3 a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

(Excitedly) That's it! That's it! That's what I need! A messenger. Someone to tell me what you and I should do to prepare for Jesus. And who better to tell us what messenger we need to hear than God Himself. But who will He send? Lord, send your messenger!

Hidden Voice: 4 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

John the Baptist. That’s the messenger God chose.

Hidden Voice: 6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

Ah, thanks God. You sent us a messenger. And what a messenger he was. But he was not the first. Isaiah, perhaps the greatest Old Testament prophet, prepared the way for the Lord.

Hidden Voice: Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. 3 A voice of one calling: "In the desert *prepare* the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. 5 And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." Isaiah 40:1-6 (NIV)

Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, prepared the way for the Lord.

Hidden Voice: "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. 2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. Malachi 3:1-2 (NIV)

God chose many messengers...but they all had just one message. “Prepare the way for the Lord.”

God chose messengers to proclaim His grace. But, as Jesus prepared to begin His ministry, He chose one last messenger, John the Baptist, to get our attention—powerfully and unmistakably...so that we will be ready for Jesus’ coming.

Hidden Voice: 7 And this was his message: ‘After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’”

But though John the Baptist was the last messenger, he wasn’t the greatest messenger. Jesus was.

Hidden Voice: 6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who

received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

15 John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'" 16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 6:1-17 (NIV)

Yes, God chose a messenger. But it wasn't just any messenger. It was His Son, Jesus Christ. And from Him, we receive the fullness of His grace. From Him we receive "one blessing after another." Jesus, the greatest Messenger, is the one who proclaimed to us the message of "grace" and "truth."

This message of "grace and truth" is not only worth hearing. It's worth preparing for. That's why God chose so many messengers. That's why He chose John the Baptist. Because God had a special message for us: of grace and truth.

The other day I found a bumper sticker in the Family Bookstore on Hall Road. It reads,
"Jesus loves you. Is the feeling mutual?"

God chose messengers for us. Why? To tell us that He does love us. To proclaim that Jesus is coming to save us."

But He sent His messengers for another reason: to prepare our hearts for Him so that the feeling will be mutual. God chose a messenger. And this is His message for you.

Hidden Voice: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way-- 3 a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him.'" Mark 1:2-3 (NIV)

God chose a messenger and a message for you. Prepare His way...and chose to make straight paths for Him. Amen.

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