
“Are You Ready Yet?”

Luke 3:1-6

Luke 3:1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar-- when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene-- 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. 3 He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 4 As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. 5 Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. 6 And all mankind will see God's salvation.'"

Luke 3:1-6 (NIV)

Children's Sermon:

Needed: Picture or figurine of Santa kneeling at the manger

What's wrong with this picture? The answer, of course, is nothing. There's nothing wrong with this picture. In fact, it's probably one of the greatest works of art anyone has ever seen. Santa is kneeling at Jesus' manger.

What is Santa doing? He's praying, He's bowing down and He's worshiping Jesus.

This is what God wants us to do, too. That's why God sent John the Baptist to us. He wanted us to be ready for Jesus. Most importantly, He wants us to be ready to worship Jesus...just like Santa Claus is doing here.

Are you ready for Jesus? Let's all kneel and pray to Jesus. "Dear Jesus, please come into my heart. I can't wait for you to come. Come now, Jesus. I'm ready for you. Amen."

Sermon:

One of the things that you and I experience most is road construction. We all know what a pain it is. It slows traffic, it ruins our schedules, and it just goes on and on and on and on. It just never seems to stop. Perhaps that's why one person said that our state tree is the orange construction barrel.

I know when I'm traveling I-75 through Flint I keep asking, "Aren't they done yet?" And, now, after three years of construction, there will be a fourth year of construction. And it seems that they'll never be done. The roads will always be under construction.

Our hearts, like the roads under construction, need some work, too. Sometimes major work. Like the T-shirt that says, "God ain't finished with me yet," Advent is a reminder that we're a long way from being ready for Jesus' coming.

God gave the people of the Old Testament thousands of years to prepare for His coming. But when John the Baptist came, were they ready? No, not by a long shot.

It seems that no matter how much time God gives, there’s never really enough time, is there. So far this Advent we’ve heard John the Baptist say,

“Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. 5 Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. 6 And all mankind will see God's salvation." Luke 3:4-6 (NIV)

But tell me, has anything really changed in these past weeks? Has anything really changed in your life? Are the crooked roads still crooked and the rough places still rough? Or has the road construction of your heart already begun?

For all you email joke senders, have you seen the email entitled, “How to Clean Your House?” It’s seven simple steps that any computer buff can use to “Clean the house.”

How To Clean The House

1. Open a new file in your PC.
2. Name it "Housework."
3. Send it to the RECYCLE BIN
4. Empty the RECYCLE BIN
5. Your PC will ask you, "Are you sure you want to delete your Housework permanently?"
6. Answer calmly, "Yes," and press the mouse button firmly....
7. Feel better?

If only it were so easy! But some of us may spend more time cleaning the hearts than we do cleaning our hearts and preparing for his coming.

Now, with only *hours* before we celebrate Jesus coming into our lives, perhaps now is a wonderful time to start the house cleaning that really needs to be done in our lives. The cleaning of our heart.

And how will we feel when we clean our hearts? How will we feel when our sinful lives have been cleansed and our hearts released from the burden of our guilt? We will feel great release, joy.

There will truly be great joy when we see Jesus. But, truth be told, the greater joy comes to us when our hearts are really cleansed. All you homemakers out there, tell me. How do you feel after you’ve cleaned the house so clean just before Christmas. Feels great, right?

That’s the kind of joy I’m talking about with our Advent preparation. The joy of Christmas is not just the joy of Jesus coming. It’s the joy of knowing that our hearts have undergone an extreme makeover—Christmas edition. That makeover is one in which our entire lives are cleansed for Jesus’ coming.

This extreme makeover occurs when the crooked ways of our life are straightened, the rough places in our lives smoothed out, and the valleys and hills of our lives leveled, we’re finally ready for joy, great joy, *extreme* joy. And that kind of joy only comes with an extreme makeover...and the extreme grace from God Himself.

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How extreme is God’s grace? All we have to do is look at the manger, the Virgin, the cattle, the sheep, and, of course, God...appearing to us as a Baby.

God’s love doesn’t get much extreme than that! Or does it? Yes, the only thing more extreme than Jesus’ birth...is His death on a cross for us. Yes, God’s extreme love is not only for the world. It’s for you. And God is offering it to us again.

Are you ready yet? Let’s do some extreme preparation as we anticipate the extreme joy of God’s extreme love for us...in the little Baby, Jesus Christ.

A Sunday school teacher asked her class, "What was Jesus' mother's name?"

One child answered, "Mary."

The teacher then asked, "Who knows what Jesus' father's name was?"

A little kid said, "Verge."

Confused, the teacher asked, "Where did you get that?"

The kid said, "Well, you know they are always talking about Verge 'n' Mary."

Close, but not the right answer. Let’s make sure we have the right answer for Jesus when He comes.

Are you ready yet? Make sure you have the right answer!

Amen.

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