

Welcome: We would like to welcome you here today for our worship service with our theme today “**Listening to the Lord’s Voice Changes Me and Affects Those Around Me**” and our text today is Luke 3:1-3, 7-18. This is our first message in our series “Communication Shift.” “Note” the messages each week are also available on the sermon player on our web page www.lightofchristwi.org.

Sermon Outline

1. What is God telling you in the context?

2. What are you hearing from the story, what verses stand out to you?

3. What is Jesus doing in your life right now as you respond to the message?

4. How is Jesus challenging you as you listened to today’s message?

5. What do you believe Jesus wants you to do this week?

KEY THOUGHTS FROM THE MESSAGE

- 1. Listening to the Lord’s voice affects me and the next generation.** When we listen to the Lord’s voice it means to listen and obey. John’s ministry really began before he was even born when he had faithful parents who listened to the Lord, who prayed for his birth and through a miracle he was born. Of all the people, the Lord could have selected as parents he chose Zechariah and Elizabeth who faithfully listened to him. Jesus tells us in *John 10:27 – My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*
- 2. Listening to the Lord’s voice prepares my heart.** The ministry of John the Baptist was all about preparing people’s heart for the coming of the Messiah and that is why John spoke out “Prepare the way for the Lord’s coming.” As the Lord is calling us to repentance today think of all the good things the Lord has ahead of us when we listen and follow his voice.
- 3. When I harden my heart to the Lord’s voice it brings judgment upon myself.** 1 John 1:8-10 *If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. ⁹ But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.*
- 4. When I listen to the Lord and I repent it changes my heart.**
- 5. The good Shepherd listens to His Father.** As Jesus walked to the cross think how closely he was listening to his Father for wisdom, courage and strength to endure the journey he was on to save you and I. Jesus cried to his Father to listen to him when all of

our sins were being poured out upon him and he said... *My God, My God, why have you forsaken me. Matthew 27:46.* Lastly Jesus spoke to his Father when he said, "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.*" Luke 23:46. Listening to the Lord...when I do it changes my heart and affects all those around me.

Message 01 | Series: Communication Shift | Theme: John Prepares the Way | Luke 3:1-4, 7-20 | Developed by Pastor Tom Graves Light of Christ Church

1. Open with prayer
2. Review the guidelines below
3. **Note: Tell the people that as you tell the story to put yourself into the story...be John.**
4. Tell the story orally
5. Rebuild the story
6. Read the story
7. Go to the questions of the heart



TARGET

We want the participants to understand why they are here and to lay a foundation of the guidelines for small group's discussions. It is helpful to go over these guidelines briefly every time your huddle meets.

SMALL GROUP / HUDDLE GUIDELINES

SAFE ENVIRONMENT: This needs to be a place where people feel comfortable opening up and sharing with one another. Below are some guidelines that will help create a safe environment:

CONFIDENTIALITY: What is said in the group stays in the group.

LISTEN: Let's value one another during the discussion by really listening to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you are going to respond, or what you are going to say next.

PAUSE: Allow a pause in conversation after someone shares. Give the person sharing the chance to finish and the group the opportunity to consider what was just shared before responding.

SILENCE: It is important to allow silence in the group as it provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members in the group to process the topic or question being considered.

NO "CROSS TALK": Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.

NO FIXING: We are not here to fix each other. Jesus does that part. Give encouragement; speak truth, point to Jesus. Don't try to solve or fix each other.

NO RESCUING: When people are sharing something deeply personal, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation by providing immediate condolences. This will often cause them to stop sharing. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

SHARING: Be sensitive about the amount of time you share.

BE SELF-AWARE: Be self-aware of how you are personally effecting the environment through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication.

"I" STATEMENTS: It's easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them", "the church," "us" "we", etc.

LISTEN TO THE STORY: When the story is being presented the most effective way to understand the story at this point is just listen...don't try to follow along in your bible. Opening the Bill will come later.

CONFLICT: We will commit to resolve conflict biblically. When conflict or sin issues between group members arise, we want to make sure that we are honoring God and each other in the way we deal with these issues. The following are a few key Scriptures in this regard (there are many others)

- If someone sins against you
 - Matthew 18:15-20
- Restoring someone in sin:
 - Galatians 6:1-5
- Forgive a sinner:
 - Colossians 3:12-13
- Reconciling differences
 - Matthew 5:23-24, Matthew 7:1-5

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John the Baptist Prepares the Way

It was now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea; Herod Antipas was ruler over Galilee; his brother Philip was ruler over Iturea and Tracoonitis; Lysanias was ruler over Abilene. ² Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. At this time a message from God came to John son of Zechariah, who was living in the wilderness. ³ Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. ⁴ Isaiah had spoken of John when he said,

“He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,

‘Prepare the way for the Lord’s coming!

Clear the road for him!

⁷ When the crowds came to John for baptism, he said, “You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? ⁸ Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. Don’t just say to each other, ‘We’re safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.’ That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. ⁹ Even now the ax of God’s judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰ The crowds asked, “What should we do?”

¹¹ John replied, “If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry.”

¹² Even corrupt tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, “Teacher, what should we do?”

¹³ He replied, “Collect no more taxes than the government requires.”

¹⁴ “What should we do?” asked some soldiers.

John replied, “Don’t extort money or make false accusations. And be content with your pay.”

¹⁵ Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered their questions by saying, “I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹⁷ He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.” ¹⁸ John used many such warnings as he announced the Good News to the people.

¹⁹ John also publicly criticized Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, for marrying Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for many other wrongs he had done. ²⁰ So Herod put John in prison, adding this sin to his many others.

Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Lk 3:1–20). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Questions of the Heart

1. John 3:2-3 says, “² Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. At this time a message from God came to John son of Zechariah, who was living in the wilderness. ³ Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven.”

- a. Why was it important for John to receive the message from the Lord first before he proclaimed it?
 - i. Why is it important not to get ahead of the Lord and what happens when we do?
 - b. Why did John go from place to place to proclaim his message instead of staying in one place and letting people come to him? How was his ministry like ministry in the market place we have at the plant?
 - c. Why is it important to repent of our sins...which means to turn from our sin and turn toward God? What happens if we don't?
 - d. John the Baptist is not a person of great wealth or power and he lived in the wilderness yet he was one of the greatest persons in the Kingdom of God. What does this tell us about God using a person like John? How do you think the world looked at John the Baptist? How can appearances be deceiving?
2. ⁴ *Isaiah had spoken of John when he said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him!'*
- a. The above verse has a double meaning...prepare the roads before the King came. Why was it important for the people to prepare their hearts through repentance before Jesus began his ministry?
3. ⁷ *When the crowds came to John for baptism, he said, "You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee the coming wrath?" ⁸ Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones.*
- a. In the book of Matthew, the crowds are identified as the Pharisees and Sadducees the religious leaders of the day. Why would John call them a brood of snakes?
 - b. Why would these religious leaders want to be baptized if they had not repented?
 - c. Why is it important to show we have repented of our sins by the way we live?
 - d. The religious leaders were leading a double life...they were compartmentalized. Why is living a double life so dangerous in a spiritual sense...they were religious leaders, but inside they were rotten.
4. ⁹ *Even now the ax of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire."*
- a. John's message to the religious leaders was rather straight to the point. What were these religious leaders in danger of in an eternal sense if they did not turn away from their sins and turn toward God?
 - b. What are we in danger of if we don't turn from our sins and put our faith in Jesus as our Savior?
 - c. Why is turning away for our sin so difficult?
 - d. Who can help us turn from our sin?

- e. Why would the religious leaders harden their heart when confronted with John's message?
 - f. True repentance must be tied to action or it is not real. Why would that be true?
 - g. If the Lord is calling us to live a fruitful life...what would that look like in today's world?
5. What do we learn about the crowds when they asked, "*What should we do*" in verse 10?
 6. What do we learn about the tax collectors in verses 12-13? If the tax collectors were truly repentant what were they to do? If you are truly repentant what would that look like in your life?
 7. John indicated when the Messiah would come (Jesus) he would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire. When we think of fire we think of purifying. What is the work of the Holy Spirit in our life?
 8. What does it mean in verse 17 when John says Jesus will separate the wheat from the chaff? Who is wheat and who is chaff when it comes to people?
 9. Verse 19 talks about warnings.
 - a. Why was John's message such a message of warning?
 - b. Who was he trying to wake up with his message?

Application and accountability

1. What is our theme for our message this today?
2. What was one thing the Lord taught you in the message today that could help you grow in faith?
3. Who do you think needs to hear this story?

Close with prayer