“The King and His Kingdom: A Call to Conversion”

Matthew 3:1-12

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 6/12/22)

All people, all over the world, are called to repent. Religion without repentance offers no shelter from the wrath of God. Christ has come to break the chains that keep His people from a saving relationship with Him. Jesus’ ministry begins in the wilderness of Judea. A herald, John the Baptist, declares that the King has come to save His people from their sin. What does God say to people who live in depravity? The same thing He says to people who think that their good works will save them: REPENT! To repent is to be converted from one who loves sin, to one who loves God. To repent is to be converted from one who loves sin, to one who wages war against indwelling sin.

John wears the simple clothing of the poor. He eats bugs and honey. The King’s herald has not come to tickle our ears; he has come so that people would prepare their hearts for the King. His message of repentance is for those who truly want to repent. The Kingdom is not composed of those happy to stay in their sin. The Kingdom does not grow by large crowds or showy services or violence or anger or politics. His is a gospel of repentance. A gospel that doesn’t include repentance is a false gospel. Repentance is not merely sorrow for sin. Feeling bad about yourself is not repentance. Genuine repentance is marked by a decisive change in life direction. It is one of the prevailing heresies of our time to think that you can just “add a little Jesus” to your life. God enables repentance. It is a God-given grace (2Tim. 2:25). It manifests itself in a change of direction. To be converted is to turn away from sin to a life of obedience to God (repent, believe, follow!!!).

John’s baptism was preparatory. It needed to be followed by faith in Jesus and obedience to Him. Christ imparts His righteousness to us, saving His people from their sin. The Kingdom of Heaven is the reign of God in the hearts and minds of those loyal to the King.

Water baptism is an outward cleansing that points to the inward cleansing done by God. John had harsh words for the “vipers” who saw baptism as something they did to make themselves right with God. They were filled with “legalistic religiosity”, pious on the outside, sinfully rotten at the core. John denies them baptism, as he does to all who are “just religious” or irreligious. Just going to church does not save you. A genuine, repentant person bears the fruit of repentance: CHRIST-LIKENESS. To know Jesus is to be changed from the inside out. Repentance looks like CHANGE. Read Isa. 1:16-20 and Luke 3:10-14 to see what the fruit of repentance looks like.

In Matt. 3:11-12, John calls the people to repent, because they need the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, the One who can accomplish salvation for His people. Verse 12 tells us of the fire that will burn the chaff away, so that your whole life will bring glory to God. The Kingdom of Heaven includes both salvation and judgement (see also John 3:16, 18). We can take solace in the words of Ps. 2:12: “How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!”

**QUESTIONS**:

1. How do God’s people prepare for Him? REPENTANCE! How do we make His paths straight?
2. How does one wage war against indwelling sin?
3. What does it mean to bear fruits worthy of repentance?
4. John confronted those who sought baptism without repentance. Even today, having a “little bit of church” seems to inoculate some against a true, saving faith in Jesus. Why did John confront those who sought baptism without repentance?
5. Paul David Tripp said, “We belong to God for His purpose and His glory… We have been created to live inside God’s boundaries.” (New Morning Mercies, June 12) Are you truly repentant if you are willfully living outside of His boundaries? Explain.
6. (personal) Have you let go of everything but Jesus? Is it important to you to declare the gospel of repentance to others? Do you need to take the outward symbol of baptism as a witness to the world of your inward cleansing?

“Take My Life, and Let It Be” (Havergal)

Take my life, and let it be

Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;

Take my moments and my days,

Let them flow in ceaseless praise,

Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move

At the impulse of Thy love;

Take my feet and let them be

Swift and beautiful for Thee,

Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing

Always, only, for my King;

Take my lips, and let them be

Filled with messages from Thee,

Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my will, and make it Thine;

It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart; it is Thine own;

It shall be Thy royal throne,

It shall be Thy royal throne.