

Repentance: Loving Jesus. Loving People (Luke 3:1-14)

(1) In the fifteenth 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 Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, (2) during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. (3) And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (4) 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. (5) 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, (6) and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" (7) 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? (8) 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. (9) 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." (10) And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" (11) And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." (12) Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" (13) And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." (14) 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."

(15) If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? (17) So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (Jas 2:15-17)

(17) But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? (18) Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (1Jn 3:17-18)

(6) "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? (7) Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? (8) Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. (9) Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, (10) if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. (11) And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. (12) And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in. (Isa 58:6-12)

1. As a good historian Luke roots all he tells us about Jesus in it's historical context. Here he specifically gives us the political and religious context. These are things we go into greater detail about during our New Testament Survey Class on Wednesday nights from 6-7:15. What Luke is telling us is historical, accurate, verifiable, factual, and true. Whether you believe it or not it happened. Luke wants you to believe it and to believe in Jesus Christ. Luke wants every reader to turn away from their sin and put their trust in Jesus for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Do you believe? Have you repented?
2. A historian today might say it like this, "In the 4th year of President Obama's term, when Robert Bentley was governing Alabama, and Wally Burns was mayor in Southside, during Billy Grahams later years. These are real people, real times, real events, and so is what Luke is writing to us about in the AD 60's. Luke's gospel is not a myth, legend, or historical fiction. Luke's Gospel is historical fact.
3. Tiberius (reign began in about AD 14) was Caesar after Augustus, who was Caesar when Jesus was born. Before Augustus was Julius Caesar. After Tiberius was Caligula. Herod the great was the father of Herod (Antipas) and Philip that are mentioned here. Herod the great was ruling when Jesus was born. We will hear more about these leaders throughout this gospel. Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas are major characters in Jesus' coming trial and crucifixion. The 15th year of Tiberius's reign would have been about (AD 29).
4. God's Word does not come to any of these "famous" men, none of the most powerful politically or religiously of that day. God's Word comes to a man in the wilderness named John the Baptist. This is the same John we learned about in Luke 1. John is a major figure in this book because of the role God has given him to play in exalting Jesus. God has given all His people a role to play in exalting Jesus. What is your role? How are you living that role out? How are you spreading God's Word? We have the Word of God now in the Old and New Testament. Are you sharing it? John went into all the region surrounding the Jordan River. What if we all went throughout all the region surrounding the Coosa River (Gadsden, Rainbow City, Southside, Glencoe, Hokes Bluff, etc.)? How are we calling people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ? Are we concerned with leading others to Christian baptism? Do we care about people who are weighted down with sin, sorrow, and satan? Who have you told that forgiveness of sins is available through Jesus?
5. So much of the New Testament is fulfilled prophecy from the Old Testament. John the Baptist fulfills prophecy from Malachi and Isaiah. John the Baptist was Jesus' forerunner to prepare the way for Him. We see the truth of Luke's gospel in it's historicity and in it's prophetic fulfillment's.
6. Jesus alone can lift and fill those who are down in the valley. Jesus fills us with life, hope, joy, peace, and love. Have you been filled? Only Jesus can humble the proud who think they are so mountainously big. We are not bigger than God. We need God for everything, we need Jesus. Only Jesus can take the crooked and make them straight. Jesus can straighten the spiritually, sexually, mentally, emotionally, morally, and ethically crooked. Jesus can smooth out and soften the roughest and hardest of hearts and set them free from sin, self, and satan. Only Jesus can do this! Jesus is the salvation of God! Have you seen Him? If so, are you showing Him to others?
7. To come to Jesus we must first see our sin, acknowledge how bad it is, recognize our need for forgiveness, turn from our sin, ask for God to forgive us and cleanse us through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, and put our trust fully in Him. We must recognize that God is holy,

hates sin, and must punish sin. We deserve God's wrath for our sin, but Jesus took God's wrath for us. Jesus was cut down for us, He was judged for us so that we might go free.

8. Those who have truly come to know and love God will bear fruit in keeping with repentance. There will be clear evidence of their change of heart. They will live a life of repentance and faith in Christ. They will have a personal faith apart from their upbringing, family history, spiritual lineage, or ancestry. Their faith will be personal, relational, sincere, genuine, and true. Their changed life will be a result of God's work, God's power, God's grace, God's Spirit, and God's Son.
9. God is looking at the heart, not the externals. Those whose heart is cold, dark, and unchanged will be cut down, thrown into the lake of fire, and experience God's wrath. Those whose heart is turned to the Lord, soft, and filled with light will have eternal life, with God, and experience His love forever and ever.
10. The fruit that John points to in this passage is all about truly loving God and truly loving people. If we love God and people we will have a proper perspective on money and possessions. If we love money and possessions we will have a faulty view of God and people, because we will try to use God and use people for money and possessions instead of using money and possessions to love God and people. The fruit of love will mark our lives if we are Christians. If we have an extra shirt we will share one with someone who does not have a shirt, starting in the family of God and moving outward. If we have extra food we will share with those who are without food, starting in the family of God and moving outward. Food and clothing are to be used to love God and love people. We should not be looking for ways to get more of people's money in order to spend it all on ourselves, but instead we should do our work out of love for people, and look for ways to serve them with our gifts, skills, and resources. We should be looking for ways to protect people, provide structure and order for people, defend people, and serve people, all for God's glory, and ultimately out of love for Him and the highest of His creation (people, not things). If we have power we should use that power to love and serve others. Part of that service is seen in teaching the truth as we see modeled in and through John the Baptist. Ultimately we should be content with what God has given us as we seek to love and glorify Him and love people. In our contentment God may bless our hard and skillful work, and if He does it is for His glory and the good of people. We are to love with our lives, time, work, extra, and all God gives us. What a privilege we have to bear fruit!
11. None of us has done this perfectly, which is why we need Jesus and His forgiveness. When we experience more of His love and forgiveness we will love Him more and love people more as we continue to mature in our faith.