

John The Baptist

Isaiah 40:1-11

Luke 1:57-80

Matthew 3:1-12

December 17, 2023

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One of the most interesting people in all of Holy Scripture is *John the Baptist*. He is the living link between the Old Testament and the New Testament; he is the last of the great Old Testament prophets, and he is the first of the New Testament witnesses. He represents all the faith and the hopes of the faithful people of the Old Testament and on behalf of them all, he points to Jesus and says, “*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29).” He is sent by God to be the *official witness* that the Messiah is on earth, and that God has kept His Old Testament promises!

John the Baptist is the promised forerunner of the Messiah, the one who will prepare the way for the Savior. *John the Baptist* prepared the way by calling the people to repent of their sins and to believe their sins are forgiven in the Messiah, in Jesus, the *Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*

And so John came, **baptizing** in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 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. Mark 1:4-6

This is how John got the nickname “*The Baptist*”. John “*the Baptist*” was the first one to introduce Holy Baptism, the new Sacrament, that unites people to the Messiah, the Christ, and the forgiveness of sins that He freely gives.

Since Holy Baptism was brand new, all believers needed to be baptized. For that reason, **John the Baptist** was mainly baptizing adults¹. He preached the Law of God and called people to repent; and then he baptized them for the forgiveness of sins.

**God has promised to work through
Holy Baptism
to forgive you your sins.**

That is what happened in your life when you were Baptized. God the Holy Spirit worked through the water and the Word to unite you to Jesus and forgive you all of your sins ... whether you were baptized as an infant, a child, or an adult. Baptism is a miracle of God where He “washes” away all your sins²!

John the Baptist’s preaching focused on **repentance and forgiveness**³. In the Old Testament prophecies, repentance is pictured as a leveling of the ground:

¹ Concerning Adult Baptism: “From Acts 2:41, 8:26-40, [et al], we learn that adults were first instructed; hence we do likewise. These people are not converted or made disciples by baptism; they are such by faith in Christ, which they confess before their baptism. In their case Baptism confirms upon them the grace of God and strengthens them in their faith, even as the Lord’s Supper does. “A Summary of Christian Doctrine,” E.W.A. Koehler, p.206 After that first generation of New Testament believers, the normal way of Baptism was Infant Baptism, similar to how ancient Israel circumcised their infant boys on the 8th day. “Little children, born within the Christian Church and brought to Baptism by those who have authority over them, are Baptized, without previous instruction, and are by such Baptism born in the Christian Church.” “A Summary of Christian Doctrine,” E.W.A. Koehler, p.206 Ultimately, it is however the Lord chooses to work in your life: whether He brings you to faith as an infant, or later in life as a child or adult.

² The word “baptism” in the Greek New Testament is the simple word “wash.” Jesus took that simple word and attached spiritual and eternal promises to it! The “washing” (= water) is a part of Holy Baptism, but the true power of Baptism is in the Word of God, the Promise of forgiveness, captured in the words Jesus taught us to use when baptizing: “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Baptism is a divine miracle in your life: God has given you “Living Water” and the “Water of Life” in Baptism! You will not die in your sin, but you have been given life in Baptism – you are “born again” – because it unites you to Jesus, who is the life and light of the world (John 1:4, 8:12)!

³ John the Baptist (preceding Christ) is called a preacher of repentance, but this is for the forgiveness of sins. That is, John was to accuse all and convict them of being sinners. This is so they can know what they are before God and acknowledge that they are lost. So they can be prepared for the Lord to receive grace and to expect and accept from Him the forgiveness of sins. This is what Christ Himself says, “Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in [My] name to all nations” (Luke 24:47). [Concordia, Smalcald Articles, Third Part, Article III, Repentance.](#)

A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be **raised up**, every mountain and hill **made low**; the rough ground shall **become level**, the rugged places **a plain**. 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 40:3-5**

There are four phrases to describe repentance as a leveling of the ground. Repentance levels your heart; it humbles you before the Lord your God. **REPENTANCE includes two parts.**

- 1. The first is sorrow for sin;**
- 2. The second is faith in Jesus Christ** *for the forgiveness of your sins.*

Because of sin, we all need to repent. The word "repent" means to "change your mind, to turn around." It is turning away from sin and turning towards God. This happens as the **LAW OF GOD** works in your heart.

The **LAW OF GOD** is the 10 Commandments; they work to show you your sin. They convict you of sin, and create guilt, shame, fear, and sorrow in your heart. Today evaluate your life in terms of the 10 Commandments⁴ -- let the Law of God work to expose sin in your life:

- ➔ Do you love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all your soul, and with all of your strength? Are you loyal to Him; committed and determined to obey His Word?
- ➔ Do you hallow His Name and keep it sacred in your life?
- ➔ Do you honor His Word and Worship Him faithfully?
- ➔ Do you rebel against authority in your life?
- ➔ Have you hurt, harmed, or hated someone?
- ➔ Are you sexually immoral?
- ➔ Do you steal?
- ➔ Do you gossip or slander or speak evil of other people?
- ➔ Is your heart full of coveting, greed, anger, or lust?

⁴ In Martin Luther's Small Catechism, we learn this: "Which sins [should we confess]? Here consider your own situation according to the Ten Commandments, whether you are a father, mother, son, daughter, employer, employee; whether you have been disobedient, dishonest, lazy; whether you have injured anyone by word or deed; whether you have stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm. "

John the Baptist's voice is still heard today, in our midst, as if it was the very first time he spoke; it is just as powerful now as it was during his lifetime.

Hear His Word And Repent Of Your Sin!

Not only does John the Baptist call you to repentance; but He also points you to Jesus, the *Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!* Your sins are forgiven because of the death and resurrection of Jesus! That is a promise God makes to you in the Gospel. Believe it! Trust it! Rely on it! Though your sin is great, God's mercy is greater! Believe the promise that your sins are forgiven in the Lord Jesus Christ!

If you need a sign that your sins are forgiven, then look to your Baptism. Baptism was God at work to wash your sins away. They were washed away and they remain washed away. Baptism is a beautiful light that continually shines over your life; always reminding you that you belong to the Lord and your sins are forgiven! Baptism is objective, it is outside of you, it is God's work in your life. Let your Baptism be a sign for you that your sins are completely forgiven! Baptism united you to Jesus, and His death and resurrection for you! Baptism is present tense: it is continually powerful and effective in your life!

You are washed clean!
You have peace with God!
Your sins are forgiven!

God sent John the Baptist to call people to repent and believe in the Messiah, in the Christ, in Jesus. That is how you properly prepare for the birth of Christ.

This week, we will celebrate the Birth of Christ. Listen to John's voice – it is fresh and new every time you hear it. John the Baptist calls to you today to repent of your sins and believe in Jesus to forgive you!

*That is how you are prepared
to celebrate Christmas!*

Amen!

God the Father,

**we thank you for John the Baptist
and his preparing the way for Your
Son**

**by preaching repentance and the
forgiveness of sins.**

**Help us to hear his voice today,
through Your Word,**

**and lead us to repent of our sins
and to trust in your forgiveness.**

Strengthen our faith this week,

**as we celebrate the birth of Your
Son, born in Bethlehem,**

to be our Savior.

In His Name we pray, Amen!

Isaiah 40:1-11

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." 6 A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. 7 The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever." 9 You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" 10 See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. 11 He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

Luke 1:57-80

67 [John the Baptist's] father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: 68 “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. 69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David 70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), 71 salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us— 72 to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, 73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham: 74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. 76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, 77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven 79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.” 80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.

Matthew 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea 2 and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’” 4 John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”