

December 8, 2002  
AM Service – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent  
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

(v1) The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The gospel is not this book of Mark but the good news that God has come to bring salvation in the person of Jesus the Messiah. Christmas is the celebration of a very special event...the Incarnation. That is that God became human. Jesus is the embodiment or “enfleshment” of God. God became flesh (like stepping out of a framed picture). Jesus is not God alone nor man alone but completely God and completely man. The whole plan of human redemption through Jesus rests on the doctrine of Christ’s divinity – that He was truly God manifested in the flesh. Remove this from Christianity and eternal life disappears. Allow Jesus to be God, and we have a solid rock upon which to build our hope of Heaven. Jesus is God and He is also human. Therefore He was tempted in every way as we are yet He did not sin. He was the perfect human being. And He suffered and experienced the hard things of this life. He can sympathize with us. His humanity and divinity is what makes perfect sense for the need of a Virgin Birth.

Luke 1:26-35

In the sixth month (of Elizabeth’s pregnancy – the mother of John the Baptist), God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." ... (Then) the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High...his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

Jesus was the promised Messiah who came to redeem man by forgiving sin as the OT predicted. And, as the OT predicted, a messenger preceded Jesus who would prepare the way and prepare the people for His coming. His name was John and he became known as the “Baptizer.” He was a cousin to Jesus. More importantly he was a representative of the old order who came to introduce the key person of the new. Just as God said and it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

"I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way"-

"a voice of one calling in the desert,  
'Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.'"

And this was John who came baptizing. Now, baptism was not something new to the Jews. Jewish converts were baptized. And there were other baptisms or ceremonial purifications by the Jews. What *was* new was John's preaching of a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People would come out to him in the wilderness, confess their sins and were baptized. Then he warned them to live a life that was consistent with their claim to have turned from sin to serve God.

For example:

Luke 3:7-14

7 Here is a sample of John's preaching to the crowds that came for baptism: "You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee God's coming judgment?"

8 Prove by the way you live that you have really turned from your sins and turned to God. Don't just say, 'We're safe--we're the descendants of Abraham.' That proves nothing. God can change these stones here into children of Abraham. 9 Even now the ax of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever your roots. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire."

10 The crowd asked, "What should we do?"

11 John replied, "If you have two coats, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry." (*Show concern and compassion for the needs of others*)

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

13 "Show your honesty," he replied. "Make sure you collect no more taxes than the Roman government requires you to." (*Don't be selfish and greedy. Be honest and treat others like you would like to be treated*)

14 "What should we do?" asked some soldiers.

John replied, "Don't extort money, and don't accuse people of things you know they didn't do. And be content with your pay." (*Be humble. Don't abuse power. Be content with what you have. What ever you do – do it well and with fairness*)

Show by your behavior that you have truly turned from sin and turned to God.

John's clothes were woven from camel hair, and he wore a leather belt; Not the latest style of his day but the clothes of someone who had to survive in the wilderness. He dressed much like the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:8) who also had been considered a messenger preparing the way for God (see Mal 3:1). John's wardrobe was quite different than other religious leaders of his time, whose flowing robes reflected their great pride in their position (12:38-39).

John's diet, locusts and wild honey, was common for survival in the desert regions. Locusts were often roasted and were considered "clean" food for the Jews (Lev 11:22);

wild honey could be found in abundance, made by the wild bees who nested in the clefts of rocks and in the trees of the valley.

This was a simple man, with a simple lifestyle and with a simple message. Every preacher has a moment when he longs for his hearers to lose sight of everything except his message. Don't listen to the way I speak. Don't look at my clothes. Don't comment on my style. Don't search for my University degree or credentials. Just listen to what I am saying. Turn from sin and turn to God ... why? The Messiah is coming! This was John's message and what he longed for. Prepare for the coming of Jesus. We have the same message today for Jesus is coming again. Prepare the way. Turn from sin to God. Jesus the Messiah is coming ... again. But let's not just say we should be prepared – let's prepare - Prove by the way you live that you have really turned from your sins and turned to God.

Message today:

Jesus is coming again.

Prepare the way.

Turn from sin turn to God.

Prove by the way you live that you have really turned from your sins to God.

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What does it mean to you that Jesus is the “enfleshment” of God?

Have you received the Baptism of John of repentance for the forgiveness of sins?

What proof can you give that you have repented (turned from sin to God)?

What would you have to do to prove your repentance real?

How prepared are you *spiritually* for Christmas?

How prepared are you for the Second Advent (coming) of Christ?

If Jesus were to return today would you feel fear or gladness?

How can you be a “John the Baptist” today?