

The Mighty One

Luke 3:11

Have you prepared yourself this holiday season for the mighty one?

Have you allowed the world to prepare you for its season of commercial materialism? By that I mean the allowance of the media in any shape or form to get you so hyped up about Christmas shopping that the reason for the season blows right by you?

Turn with me in Matthew's gospel to chapter 3, verses 1-12.

Just as God revealed his purposes in advance to his prophets in ancient Israel (Amos 3:7) "*For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets*" The Lord has sent John the Baptist to prepare Israel for his climatic revelation in history.

– The coming of the Mighty One –

It was believed in early Judaism that prophecy had ceased but John drew the crowds by his message in the wilderness. Why not in the city where the people and sin flourished?

Was it not in the wilderness where Moses met the Lord?

Was it not to the wilderness that the people of Israel were led by God when he delivered them from Egypt?

Was it not the wilderness that God gave the Israelites the law?

Isn't in the lonely wilderness that we are more open to the message of God?

It is the wilderness that John the Baptist preaches his message "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand"

Let's notice John's 4 point principle to prepare oneself for God's kingdom:

1. Repent – change your heart, and this is not a one-time prayer of relief but a way of life.
2. Confess your sin – acknowledge your wrongs to God whether in thoughts or actions.

3. Be Baptized – show the community of believers that with an outward sign you desire an inward change.

4. Bear Fruit- by your repentant heart and confession of sin, your life will begin to change from self-centered to God-centered.

What would happen if I got dressed up with a robe of camel's hair and went to the mall and set up a booth, a plate of dead locusts, a cup of honey for dipping and a sign that reads "Free Food" all the while at the top of my lungs – preach "Repent – confess your sins, be baptized for God's kingdom is here!" – You know you wind up in jail or in the funny farm.

His message moved the people; look at verse 5

"Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him." (ESV)

Why?

John the Baptist is speaking the words of the prophet Isaiah in verse 3 *"Prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight"* listen to his testimony of Jesus from the third chapter of the gospel of John;

"He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. I am of the earth, and my understanding is limited to the things of earth, but he has come from heaven. He tells what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! Those who believe him discover that God is true. For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God's Spirit is upon him without measure or limit. The Father loves his Son, and he has given him authority over everything. And all who believe in God's Son have eternal life. Those who don't obey the Son will never experience eternal life, but the wrath of God remains upon them."
(NLT)

Have you prepared your heart for the Mighty One?

What is it about Jesus that Matthew would tie the words of Isaiah 9:6 to this man from Nazareth?

Is it that John the Baptist said Jesus would baptize with the power of the Holy Spirit?

Is it that Jesus came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it?

Is it that Jesus can cleanse a leper?

When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. Matt 8:1-3 (NIV)

Is it that Jesus can calm the winds & sea?

Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" Matt 8:23-27 (NIV)

Is it that Jesus can heal a paralytic?

Is it that Jesus can open the eyes of the blind?

As Jesus and the disciples left the city of Jericho, a huge crowd followed behind. Two blind men were sitting beside the road. When they heard that Jesus was coming that way, they began shouting, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" The crowd told them to be quiet, but they only shouted louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" Jesus stopped in the road and called, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord," they said, "we want to see!" Jesus felt sorry for them and touched their eyes. Instantly they could see! Then they followed him. Matt 20: 23-29 (NLT)

What is it about Jesus that makes him mighty?

Was it his words on giving to the needy?

Was it his words to the weary looking for rest?

Was it his words about his concern for the children?

What is it about Jesus that makes him mighty?

Was it his words of conviction about anger, adultery or the misuse of language?

Matt 5:22

"But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. (NIV)

Matt 5:27-28

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (NIV)

Matt 12:36

"But I tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken." (NIV)

Yes – Jesus fulfills every one of these!
But are these the most important?
Let's find out!

It's just a small, white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identification, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past 10 years or so.

It all began because my husband Mike hated Christmas--oh, not the true meaning of Christmas, but the commercial aspects of it-- overspending ... the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma--the gifts given in desperation because you couldn't think of anything else.

Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike. The inspiration came in an unusual way.

Our son Kevin, who was 12 that year, was wrestling at the junior level at the school he attended; and shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church, mostly black. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue

and gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes. As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford.

Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. And as each of their boys got up from the mat, he swaggered around in his tatters with false bravado, a kind of street pride that couldn't acknowledge defeat. Mike, seated beside me, shook his head sadly, "I wish just one of them could have won," he said. "They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right out of them."

Mike loved kids--all kids--and he knew them, having coached little league football, baseball and lacrosse. That's when the idea for his present came. That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes and sent them anonymously to the inner-city church.

On Christmas Eve, I placed the envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me. His smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year and in succeeding years.

For each Christmas, I followed the tradition--one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on.

The envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning and our children, ignoring their new toys, would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents.

As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the envelope never lost its allure.

The story doesn't end there.

You see, we lost Mike last year due to dreaded cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree, and in the morning, it was joined by three more. Each of our children, unbeknownst to the others, had placed an envelope on the tree for their dad.

The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing around the tree with wide-eyed anticipation watching as their fathers take down the envelope.

Has the Mighty One affected your life yet?

1. The mother pleased her husband by giving to the needy.
2. In turn, this affected the children who saw how it pleased their father and followed in Mom's footsteps.
3. What is it that will please God's heart this holiday season?
 - If the world will follow John the Baptist's 4 point principle!
 - Repent
 - Confess their sin
 - Be Baptized
 - Bear Fruit

Each of us must prepare our heart for the Mighty One – Jesus Christ

Will you let him affect you?

You will receive a Christmas gift that you will remember forever!
A gift that will not rust, rot or be destroyed!

Let the Mighty One do mighty things in your life!

**Stay close to the One who loves you the most
Jesus!**