

**Series: That You May Know... (Luke)**  
**[The Way of the Lord is Prepared- Luke 3:2-6]**

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## Introduction

- **Being Prepared**
  - Think back with me to your grade school days. Lets choose second grade. If you were like me a new year with a new teacher and new classmates brought some anxieties. This was compounded by the fact that we have a ritual in America called “back to school shopping”
    - This is where parents, grandparents and children run to the store (walmart) grab the prepared list and seemingly everyone does their shopping on the same night! It is a madhouse.
    - I remember in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade getting a trapper keeper. It is a fancy binder with a flap and Velcro. I was cool!
  - **Yet, all of this pomp and circumstance is not the purpose of my second grade education. All of this happens to prepare the way for me to learn.**
- What we see in God’s word is the same... everything in your life (even the life of Christ) is working to point us to the salvation and grace found in our Savior.
- John the Baptist was sent so that we may know the way of the Lord is prepared
- Everything in history and every since reminds us that the way of the Savior is prepared! Are you listening? Are you willing to respond and live out the grace of Christ in your life?
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**Read [Luke 3:2-6]**

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## Body

- **HE Prepares You With His Word (3:2)**
  - **Words have power.** Earnest Hemingway once wrote a 6-word story: **For sale-baby shoes- never worn.** Hearing this story our minds begin to race. Did Hemingway buy these shoes for a friend or even himself? Were they the wrong size? Were they not the right style or gender for the child? Did they lose a precious child? For those who have walked this difficult road I want you to know that God loves you and He loves your child more than any parent could ever love.
  - **The most powerful words were not written or spoken by any man but come from our Savior Jesus Christ.**
    - The Word of the Lord is so wonderful that Jesus is called the Word.
      - **John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
  - **Why is this important? Luke reminds us that God prepares us, he prepares our hearts to receive salvation, and he prepares us by his word (3:2)**

- **He prepares us by giving His Word (3:2)**
  - The word of God came to John, he went preaching (the word), and as it is written.
  - **We have no greater gift. We have no greater tool than the Word of God in our lives.**
  - But how does the Word of God prepare us?
  - **Jer 23:29** “Is not My word like a fire?” says the LORD, “**And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?**
    - i. Every time you hear the Word of the Lord He is hammering at the hard difficult walls and chains in your life
    - ii. Some people need a lifetime of hammering, some people only need several hits.
    - iii. God is preparing you with his Word...are you taking the Word of the Lord seriously?
- **He prepares You to speak His Word (3:3)**
  - a. In one verse—the word of the Lord came to John and in v.3 he is proclaiming and preaching the baptism of repentance.
  - b. **Now I know that no one in here is John the Baptist.** Still, God prepares each one of us to speak His Word.
  - c. Our primary objection is... Lord what will I say!
    - 1. Don’t worry Jesus has you covered. **Luke 12:11** “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. <sup>12</sup> For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”
    - 2. **Do not worry... he prepares you to speak His word.**
    - 3. He does not prepared you to remain silent.

• **That you may know.... The Way of the Lord is Prepared**

- **He Prepares you in the Wilderness (3:2)**
  - **Wilderness= an uncultivated, uninhabited, and inhospitable region.**
    - i. **A neglected or abandoned place**
  - The wilderness is a **place where no one wants to be**. It’s inhospitable. Its also a place where you do not want to meet a man with camel’s hair for clothes eating wild honey and locust calling people snakes!
  - **Everyone will walk through the wilderness one day.**
    - a. For some it’s the word cancer. Its losing a child. For some its losing a job or getting turned down by your favorite school. Maybe your wilderness is a broken marriage, a relationship hanging by a thread. Maybe it’s the rejection or thought of being a lone.
    - b. Here is hope→ even in the wilderness→ you can hear a voice of one.
      - i. **Can you hear?**
  - **With Jesus Christ... the wilderness can become a place of renewal.**
    - a. All 4 Gospels locate John’s ministry in the dessert which biblical (Ezek 20:33-38; Hos 2:14-23) and contemporary literature portrayed as the likely sight for the renewal of the people of Israel (NAC).
    - b. **If you hear and respond to the voice of the Lord... the wilderness becomes a place where you can find life.**
    - c. **Sorrow is our John the Baptist, clad in grim garments, with rough arms, a son of the**

wilderness, baptizing us with bitter tears, preaching repentance; and behind him comes the gracious, affectionate, healing Lord, speaking peace and joy to the soul. (Frederic Huntinton)

d. Are you ready for your wilderness to be place of renewal?

• **That you may know.... The Way of the Lord is Prepared**

• *He Prepares you to respond (3:2)*

• **Hearing the good news of Jesus Christ can be suffocating for our sin**

- John responded to the multitudes “you brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come!
- Snakes only come out when the fire gets hot.
- The Gospel (that Jesus died for our sake and rose again) is debilitating to our sinful nature. Jesus defeated sin and death at the cross.
  - Let your sin go. Let it be forgiven. God has already prepared

• **Hearing the Good news of Jesus Christ is liberating for those who find forgiveness.**

• *The old hymn says: he breaks the power of canceled sin. What joy to know that our sin is canceled. What comfort is found in the blood of Christ.*

a. **Rom. 8:2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me **free** from the law of sin and death.

• **The sacrifice was prepared that we might be set free.**

• **Hearing the good news of Jesus Christ overwhelms and overcomes our obstacles**

- a. The gospel makes your path straight, fills your valleys, brings down mountains and smoothes our the rough spots.
- b. What valley is keeping you away from the Lord.
  - i. *Do you say I can not believe... or Lord why did this happen...?*
  - ii. Are you saying the valley is too deep?
- c. What mountain/obstacle is keeping you from his grace?
  - i. Lord if you will just move/remove/give me.
- d. What rough spot do you need smoothed?

• **That you may know.... The Way of the Lord is Prepared**

## Conclusion

• **That you may know.... The Way of the Lord is Prepared... He has prepared you to hear and receive His grace today.**

- Because of the voice in the wilderness the people ask... What shall we do then (vv. 10, 12, 14).
- **So what shall we do? (3:3)**
  - Repent → find forgiveness → walk in obedience
  - Repent Here literally means a change of mind but refers more broadly to the human dimension involved in the experience of conversion in contrast to the divine element,

regeneration (NAC).

- Since forgiveness was unthinkable without repentance, John summoned the people to express their repentance in baptism (NIGNT).

### He prepares you even in the Wilderness!

- **2Cor. 4:17** For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,
- **2Cor. 4:18** while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.
- **If you are living in a wilderness dessert today.** If you are sick, broken, and in despair hear this verse... the voice of ONE crying in the wilderness.
  - You do not need to hear any voice... you only need one... the voice of salvation and comfort.
  - We do not lose heart.... We look to things that are eternal.. Because the Lord has prepared you.... And is building a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory.
- **He has prepared you... to receive his free grace... he has prepared you to live out His grace.**

# Notes

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- Luke indicates the beginning of a new section stylistically. By the call of God to John, and by the prophet's activity, initiated by God, a salvation-historical event is introduced. A scriptural proof text forms the conclusion, 3:4-6 (Bovon).
- Annas the high priest occupied office 6-15 CE
  - Caiaphas, his stepson 18-36 CE.
- This pericope (3:1-6) has a twofold purpose: to place Jesus' ministry in the midst of world history (3:1-2a) and to set the ministry of John the Baptist in the midst of OT hope (3:4-6).
- External ancient sources testify to the existence of John the Baptist (See Josephus Antiquities 18.5.2). Josephus stresses the political fears that John aroused in Herod, while the Gospels focus on his moral preaching, even against the political leadership (ECNT).
- John has a unique ministry, since there is only one forerunner to prepare us for the Christ, yet his ministry reflects the OT prophets in general (NIV).
- John does not divide the secular and the sacred. He is as concerned to announce the coming of Jesus as he is to discuss Herod. His prophetic role is to address sin or blessing wherever it surfaces (NIV).
  - Materialism and self-indulgence, Herod's sins, are equally as spiritually damaging as laziness.
- In a real sense, this passage applies to another group, which I call the 'tweeners.' "tweeners" are the people who see themselves as in relationship with God, but who in fact are not really in communion with him, because they have not trusted him. They look in, but really are out' thus, they are located 'between' their claim and the reality in a way someone who openly rejects God is not (NIV).
- John illustrates→
  - The preacher must bear good news as well as news that exposes sin (NIV)
  - Recognizing that we are accountable to God can be either suffocating or liberating. It suffocates us when we continue in sin and liberate when one finds forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

### 3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,

- Note the chronology (of Herod and the High Priests) are not followed by a sentence of John's activity as in Matthew and Mark but by God's intervention "the word of the Lord came..." Through this God's activity reaches into the course of time (Bovon).
- The wilderness was the place of calling, the area around the Jordan the place of proclamation (Bovon).
- Around the Jordan→
  - This expression is found in the Hebrew Bible and alludes to the region of Sodom and Gomorrah, ancestral home of sin, which is indeed connected to the sinful Dead Sea, according to Jewish Tradition (Bovon).
- Is there a theological sense to wilderness as well?

- Any effort to see the wilderness as a figure for demonic attack must be rejected (ECNT)
- It is possible to see the wilderness as a place of special reflection and reception of revelation: Israel received the law there, John receives his call there, and Jesus often retreats there (3:2; 4:42; 9:12) (ECNT).
- Baptism→
  - The Baptist's water baptism seals a personal decision to accept that one's entire past life is under God's judgment, and to wait solely for his forgiveness. The unique eschatological event is no longer the primary issue; the personal responsibility of the individual is underscored (Bovon).
    - This step leads to the construction of a new reality in thought, faith, and practice.
  - Baptism is not to be isolated from the repentance mentioned here. Nor is it to be isolated from faith (NAC).
  - The mention of repentance shows that, like other Jewish ritual washings, it was understood as a symbolical action ineffective without the appropriate inward attitude [1QS 3:3-13] (NIGNT)
  - John's baptism is a prophetic eschatological washing; that is, it is a baptism of promise that looks to the greater baptism of the Spirit. It points forward to the cleansing that comes to those who responds to Messiah's offer with faith (ECNT).
- Repentance→
  - Here literally means a change of mind but refers more broadly to the human dimension involved in the experience of conversion in contrast to the divine element, regeneration (NAC).
  - Since forgiveness was unthinkable without repentance, John summoned the people to express their repentance in baptism (NIGNT).
  - The term itself, given the Semitic setting of John's ministry, is related to the Hebrew term *sub*, to turn (ECNT).
    - This idea in a religious context speaks of a reorientation of one's perspective from sin to God.
  - The heart that turns in repentance is to express itself in concrete acts and await God's deliverance (ECNT).
  - Though the Greek word repentance (*metanoia*) means a change of the mind, the concept of repentance has OT roots in the idea of turning to God (NIV).

<sup>4</sup> as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying:

*"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:*

*'Prepare the way of the LORD;*

*Make His paths straight.*

- If creation bows to God's coming, certainly human hearts should as well (NIV)
- Luke sets his to put with a slight tension: When John is crying, he is actually no longer located in the wilderness but the Jordan Valley. Perhaps Luke knows that the wilderness reaches almost to the Jordan. Luke separates the wilderness from the Jordan because, in his opinion, this latter luxuriant region is symbolically connected with sin (Bovon).
- Luke is not so concerned with presenting John as the fulfillment of this passage as he is in locating John and the sequence of events of which John is a part within this redemptive-historical context (NICNT).
- Wilderness→
  - All 4 Gospels locate John's ministry in the desert which biblical (Ezek 20:33-38; Hos 2:14-23) and contemporary literature portrayed as the likely sight for the renewal of the people of Israel (NAC).

- The citation from Isaiah does not refer only to the preaching of repentance and water baptism, but also to active anticipation of the Lord.
- The formula “as it is written” introduces the fulfillment that Luke sees present here (ECNT).
- The figures concerning the clearing of the way are standard ancient Near Eastern metaphors about clearing the way for the entry of a king of a god. The clearing prepares for the glorious entry of the sovereign figure (ECNT).
- Isaiah’s picture of preparing for God’s salvation is a supernatural preparing of a highway. The leveling of the geographic obstacles is a way of portraying God’s coming as powerful and without obstruction (ECNT).
  - Thus the way is cleared for a humble and righteous people; the imagery has ethical dimensions (ECNT).

5 *Every valley shall be filled  
And every mountain and hill brought low;  
The crooked places shall be made straight  
And the rough ways smooth;*

- Mountain made low →
  - This and the other pictures in this verse should be seen as metaphors for repentance. To be made low refers to the humbling of the proud mentioned earlier in Luke 1:52 and later in 14:11; 18:14 (NAC).
  - Valley/mountain/crooked/rough → a poetic way of saying that the way of the Lord is made easier by having a people already repentant of their sins and prepared to meet him (NIGTC).

6 *And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ ”*

- To “see” something is, in Semitic idiom, the same as having part in it. (Bovon).

v.21 → now it happened; suggests a transition: the main concern shifts from John to Jesus, whose genealogy (vv. 23-38), installation (4:1-13) and first public activities (4:14-30) follow. (Bovon).

- The repetition of the word “do” or “produce” (vv 8, 10, 12, 14) shows the link between John’s remarks and the crowd’s response. The crowd knows that the important issue is not getting baptized but responding to God with a certain kind of heart and life (NIV).

## Illustrations

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# Application

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- God always has a voice. (3:2)
  - In ages past God's word was spoken.
- We will always have His Word
- God's Word demands action (3:3)
- The way of the Lord is prepared

He Prepares You with His Word

He prepares even in the wilderness

He prepares you to respond