

REPENT

- I In the **Gospel reading** we just heard,
- A We learn that **the Word of God came to John** – an expression that literally translated would be that **the living Word of God became in John** meaning that the Word of God became alive within him.
- B Luke informs us thereby that John – **the final Prophet** of the First Testament - **embodies the character** of Prophet - a successor of **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Malachi** and others.
- II **John the Baptizer was the messenger** of whom Malachi spoke in our First Testament reading – sent by God to **prepare the way of the coming Messiah**.
- A Malachi contemplated slowly and carefully what Messiah's advent would portend.
- B **Who can abide the day of his coming, and who can stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire and fullers' soap.**

- III Fire – to purify, and alkali soap to cleanse.
- A This was to be the message of John: **to proclaim a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.**
 - B Do we understand Malachi and John rightly?
 - C **Are we the ones** who are unclean who need to be refined and purified?
 - D To relate John to someone today, we should probably compare him with a **Pentecostal preacher** – one who preaches in a tent on the outskirts of town - not in the larger, more comfortable places of the city.
- IV Both of John's **parents were of priestly descent**, so he was rightly a priest although there is no indication in Scripture that he performed that role.
- V The **Song of Zechariah** that was our Psalmody expressed his Father's Spirit-filled joy that his only son born very late in life to him and Elizabeth would be **the prophet of the Most High God.**

VI When **Mary bearing the Christ Child** within herself came to visit her cousin Elizabeth, as soon as she entered the room, John leaped in his Mother's womb.

A He was **filled with the Spirit from conception** as the Angel had announced to Zechariah for he could sense the **Presence of Jesus** even before birth – one reason I always encourage **expectant mothers** to receive the Sacrament frequently.

B **When John did begin his ministry it was in the spirit and power of Elijah presenting himself as he understood himself** within the context of the mission God had given him.

C **The religious officials did not understand him.**

D Matthew recorded that when the Sadducees and Pharisees came to the Jordan to be baptized, he shouted:

You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance.

Every tree that does not bear fruit will be cut and thrown into the fire.

VII Among you stands one whom you do not know! John said to them.

A Many who came out to the desert wilderness to hear him **were convicted of sin** and presented themselves for baptism.

B But his preaching was a proclamation of **raw truth!**

C Would it be received today?

VIII Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

- **Clean up your act!**
- **Get your life together!**
- **Get back into Church!**
- **Place God first in your life!**

IX Repent!

- Turn around: you are heading in the **wrong direction** with your life.

- Your way is **not God's way**. Your **will** is contrary to God's.

X **To repent means to change direction.**

- A It is far more than an **intellectual change of one's doctrine**.
- B It is **authenticated in a way of living and speaking** that reflects repentance.
- C A mere **OUTWARD confession of faith** will not **suffice**.
- D **Baptism with no cost in terms of amendment of life is deficient – a depreciation of grace.**

XI What do we do with our time?

- A Does God have 1/10th of my time?
- B Is there any **love** for my neighbor? Any **forgiveness**?
- C Is there any **evidence of the Holy Spirit** within me?
- D **Fairness** in my dealings?
- E **What do I do with my money?**

F Does God receive **His tenth** of that which He has given me or does He receive what remains after I have **satisfied my desires?**

XII Speaking of which, please *pray for your Vestry* which will meet Tuesday night and decide what or whom will be eliminated?

XIII Will it be staff, children's ministry, youth ministry, breakfast or something else that is severed from the budget?

XIV How many of the **core values and goals** that we so cheerfully set will be **purged** because not all are willing to give as much as they are able?

XV **Repentance, faith, and Baptism are free gifts** but they do come to us with responsibilities attached.

XVI **Jesus knew the cost of discipleship.**

A He came to John for Baptism in His humanity.

B As the **Holy Spirit came upon Him in His humanity** He embarked upon His mission to seek and to save the lost culminating with the **sacrifice of His Life.**

C And Jesus' crucifixion fulfilled the greatest prophecy of John the Baptist: **Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.**

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, come! We need new selves. Your love gave us birth, now we pray for daily rebirth. You gave us the gift of life, now we pray for revival. Only through Your grace will this be possible. Come, and bless us with the fullness of Your life-changing Spirit. Amen