

Cover page

Scripture: Luke 3:18-20

Sermon: Good News to the People

Text: Luke 3:18 -- "So, with many other exhortations, he preached good news to the people."

Proposition: "Good News to the People" as preached by John the Baptist is the good news which people must hear if they are know and be ready for Jesus Christ.

Dates written: December 7, 1973.

Dates and places used:

Dec. 9, 1973 - DAYLAND PARK, FLORIDA

Reference: July 21, 1950

Subject: Good Love to the People

Text: July 21, 1950, with many other contributions, he preached good love to the people.

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Introduction:

1. A tourist was travelling in Florida for the first time, and after driving in the heat and humidity for much of a very hot day, he began looking for a place to take a swim. He was in the middle part of the state, and so he finally came to a large lake. A small boy was fishing, and he asked the youngster if he might take a swim.

"Sure," said the boy, "nobody would mind."

"How about snakes," the tourist asked, "are there any snakes in the lake?"

"No snakes in this lake," replied the lad.

Being assured that there were no snakes in the lake, the man put on his swim suit and dived in. After swimming a few yards from the shore, he looked back and saw all the ~~moss and~~ bushes growing over the water near bank and he began again to wonder about the snakes. "How are you so sure the lake doesn't have any snakes?" he yelled at the boy.

"Oh, I'm sure," said the lad, "because the alligators ate them all up."

(Quote, 11-18-73, p. 499)

2. The alligators were, of course, the chief source of any real danger to the man, and of any point to the story.

3. The "snakes" in our Scripture tale of today are so visible that we easily may miss the safety and good news which is really the point of the record. The arrest of John the Baptist for the things he had said about King Herod is ^{an} the obvious snaky thing here. In the Scripture preceding this passage, John's warning of the coming of the Messiah to winnow out the bad "chaff" and then to condemn it to "unquenchable fire" seem to stand out. Actually, these "snakes" are not the important elements of the story. The top item in this Scripture, the "alligator," is the phrase "he preached good news to the people." We consider here John's "good news to the people" because it is the basic good news of the Christian gospel. This good news is what this Advent and Christmas season is all about.

I. Baptism for the forgiveness of sins (Jn. 3:3) was the first good news preached by John the Baptist.

1. A college student had not been doing very well in class work, because he found his time more-interestingly spent getting to know the local girls a bit better; all in the interest of college-community relationships. When his parents reproached him about the poor report that had just been received by them, he wrote home that part of the trouble was poor lighting, and asked that they send money for a study lamp. A few days later his room mate came into the room, took a look at him, and said, "You look all broken up. What's wrong?"

The student said, "I wrote home for a study lamp."

His room mate responded, "So what?"

To which the student said, "they sent the lamp."

Sometimes when we get forgiveness and that for which we ask from a loved one, we are not so pleased! I take it that in this case the better news for the student would have been to have received the money.

2. But good news is good news when it says that you ^{will} ~~can~~ be forgiven anything in your past, by God, if you really want to be forgiven, if you are repentant for it.

3. We know that many people came to hear John, and that many then were indeed baptised with water by him. Included in this number ~~was~~ Jesus himself who was recognized by John, and whose baptism is recorded as having been especially visited by the Holy Spirit. That event was good news for the world!

II. That those who are forgiven should demonstrate good and righteous living is the second element of John's good news.

1. When King George VI of England was a boy (known as Albert), he and his older brother, Edward, stood with noses pressed against a window, watching a group of urchins having a snowball fight outside the palace. When their governess left the room, they slipped out to join the fight. Soon, a badly aimed snowball smashed a palace window, bringing a guard on the run. He dragged the snow-covered group off to the precinct sergeant, who bellowed at the first lad, "What's your name, boy?"

"My name ~~is~~ is Edward, Prince of Wales," said the boy, standing haughtily at attention.

"D, yes? And what's yours?" he asked the second in line.

"Albert, Duke of York."

"What a bunch! growled the sergeant. "And who are you?" he said, turning to a third boy.

That lad hesitated; then wiping his nose on his sleeve, he replied, "I'm going to stand wiv my buddies, guvnor -- I'm the Archbishop of Canterbury."

(Clyde Murdock, A Treasury of Humor, Zondervan)

That's the way it is quite often, when you're with a group you ~~get~~^{FEEL} to ~~where~~^{THAT} you've got to do what they do. Obviously the London street boy did not believe his new playmates, but he put up a good front in trying to hide his name like he thought they were trying to ~~do~~ *hide theirs.*

2. When you're a Christian, you do things not so much because you want to put on a front, but because you believe the things you do are the things God would have you do, and you love him so much that you want to do them more than anything else.

3. John the Baptist preached the good news in many other ways than

"O, dear, what a journey," he
said, "it's a long one."

"It's a long one," he said,
"but it's a journey worth making."

"That's just what I need," he
said, "I'm the only one who's
left."

My dear friend, I am sorry to
hear of your illness.

"I'm sorry to hear of your
illness," he said, "but I'm
glad to hear that you're
getting better."

"I'm sorry to hear of your
illness," he said, "but I'm
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"I'm sorry to hear of your
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those recorded in the Scriptures.

We're told that in our text's first few words: "So, with many other exhortations, he preached good news to the people." He did his preaching from the drive of an earnestly-held conviction, ~~without a doubt~~, because he loved God and because he was concerned that others come to know God, to be forgiven by him, and to know the joy that follows repentance.

IV. John's greatest good news, to which which the rest leads, is that Christ baptises "with the Holy Spirit" and
~~with fire"~~

1. Luke records it thusly: "Now when all the people were baptised, and when Jesus also had been baptised and was praying, the heaven ~~was~~ opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased." After that, John the Baptist was ~~mentioned~~ no more and the record is entirely about Jesus.

2. A school class was discussing the famous early-American Boston Tea Party. "Do you think it was right for

the record of the Court.

It is the first in our text.

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the colonists to throw all that tea into Boston Harbor?" asked the teacher.

"No," was the unanimous reply, "they were causing pollution!"

from Successful Farming, 8-73)

These youngsters, unaware of circumstances as they had originally been, were putting their own interpretation on things of history.

3. Similarly, Jesus changed the direful message of John the Baptist from one of repenting and doing good in order to escape the unquenchable fire, to one of serving ones fellow men and of pleasing God because you want to ~~do it~~ purely as something enjoyable and good. That is ~~really~~ the baptism of the Holy Spirit: doing something with a kind, gentle, and enthusiastic spirit and not because you have to, not to meet a requirement or a law.

For God - THROUGH OTHERS

IV. John demonstrated that it is good to proclaim stubbornly and persistently the good news that he had, even if this got him into trouble; and in so doing he set an example for us.

1. A student who had become interested in the founder of psycho-

the children who throw all that tea
the Boston Harbor. I asked the teacher
if she would be good enough to
they were capital children!
from the Boston Harbor (p. 2-3)
were very large, numerous of circles
changes in their individuality
were making their own interpretation
of the history.

... I have observed the
direct message of the teacher
and one of repetition and doing good in
order to secure the responsible fire
to one of every one and follow you and
of pleasure. But because you want to do
it turn to something enjoyable and
good. That is really the function of
the Holy Spirit: joining individuals with
kind, gentle, and enthusiastic spirit
and not because you have to, not to
meet a requirement or a law.

... I am convinced that it is good
to make children study and voluntarily
the good way, that is, even if this
is not the best; and in so doing
it is not an example for us.

... student who had become in-
terested in the form of psycho-

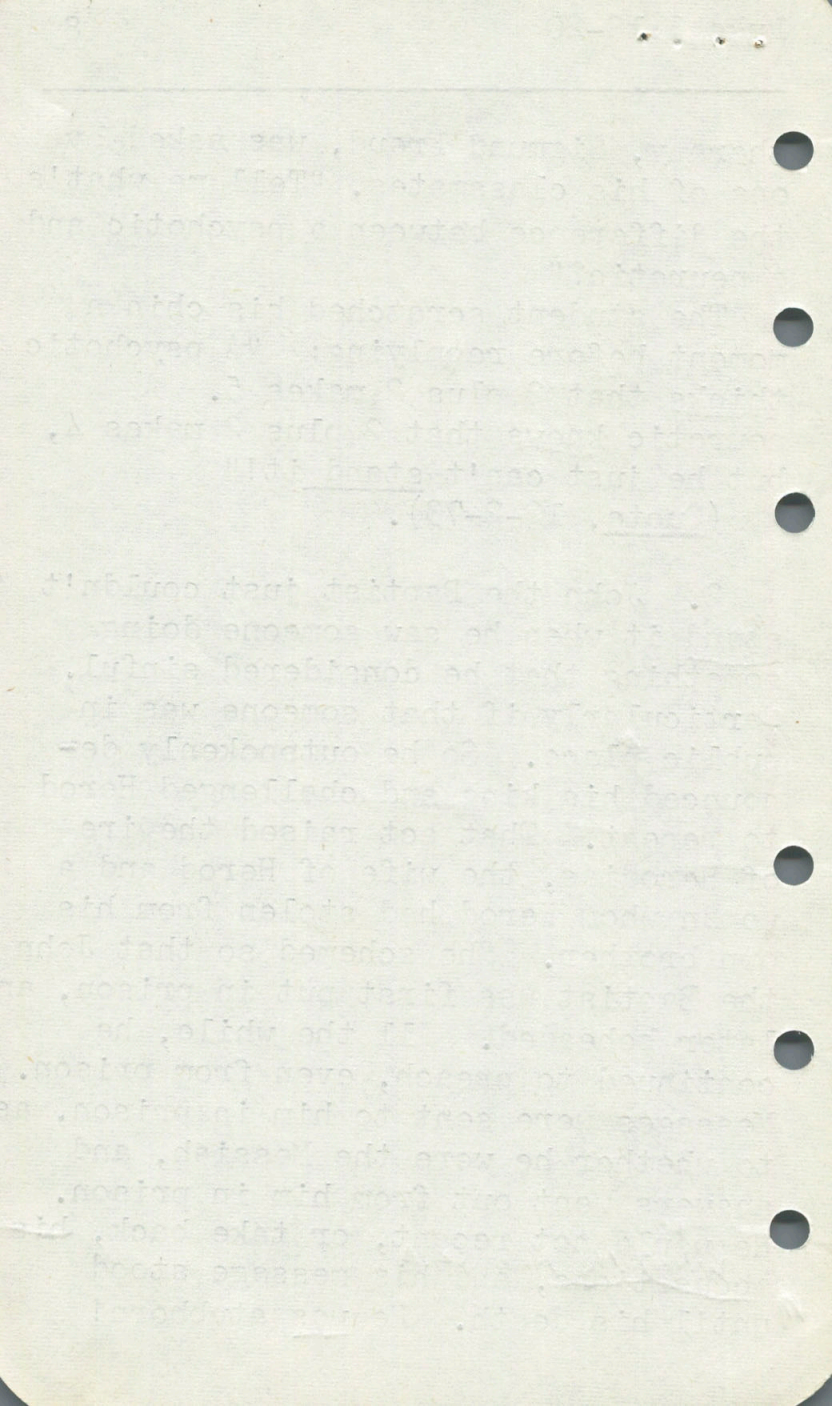
therapy, Sigmund Freud, was asked by one of his classmates, "Tell me what's the difference between a psychotic and a neurotic?"

The student scratched his chin a moment before replying: "A psychotic thinks that 2 plus 2 makes 5. A neurotic knows that 2 plus 2 makes 4, but he just can't stand it!"

(Quote, 12-2-73).

2. John the Baptist just couldn't stand it when he saw someone doing something that he considered sinful, particularly if that someone was in public place. So he outspokenly denounced his king and challenged Herod to repent. That act raised the ire of Herodias, the wife of Herod and a woman whom Herod had stolen from his own brother. She schemed so that John the Baptist was first put in prison, and later beheaded. All the while, he continued to preach, even from prison. Messages were sent to him in prison, as to whether he were the Messiah, and answers went out from him in prison. He would not recant, or take back, his accusations, and his message stood until his death. He was stubborn!

WHAT HE HAD SAID



3. When we have trouble getting response to our pleas^{AND SUGGESTIONS} for what we consider ~~XXXXX~~ Christian action, we tend to be somewhat condemnatory towards those whom we cannot budge. Clergy are all too often that way, aren't we? When we are not successful in church growth, while a nearby church is, it is easy ~~with~~ to give up, or ~~else~~ to feel guilty, or to rationalize that we can do no more than we've done. The more-Christian course, if you're convinced you're right, is ~~just~~ to keep on trying, even in the face of seeming failure.

Conclusion:

1. We have been talking about "good news to the people." This is something that is proclaimable in music, and we hear it in the Christmas music all over the place at this time of year. Sometimes we pay little attention to that music, just treating it like any other musical background. The music is nice, but we react differently to the season it proclaims. We may even become resentful when we feel pressure to spend heavily or to get involved actively in social or serving activity, if we heed the pressures of Christmas time.

3. The church has been too busy setting
its face to the world, that it has
lost sight of its mission. The church
is not a social club, it is a
community. It is a community of
people who are committed to each other
and to the world. It is a community
that is called to love and to serve.
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2. ~~Good news to the people is still~~ proclaimable, in the meanings of John the Baptist. The proclamation that God loves us and forgives us should lift our spirits. We have summarized John's message of good news this way:

(1) The past can be forgiven and outlived. Repentance for the wrong parts of ones past will bring forgiveness and can guide you to baptism as a symbol of a new start into better living.

(2) This repentance can bring a warm (or fiery), all-pervading presence, ~~which we call~~ the Holy Spirit, into your heart.

(3) When you experience the Holy Spirit within you, your natural response demonstrates your love and gratitude for your relief from depression which is caused by your sense of guilt, perhaps for past ~~or~~ present wrongdoing.

(4) The good news is so great that it is worth getting into serious trouble for, if that should be necessary.

3. Good news to the people as preached by John the Baptist is the good news which people must hear if they are to know and be ready for

2. Look now to the people as still
in darkness, the meaning of John
the Baptist. The proclamation that
John and his followers as should
bring our light. We have summarized
John's message of good news this way:
(1) The sinner can be forgiven
and forgiven. Forgiveness for the
sinner is the message of good news. It is
the message of good news to you to
be forgiven and to start a new start
in your life.
(2) This message can give
a new life to you, all-giving
message which is called the Holy
Spirit, who gives life.
(3) However, experience the
gift of Spirit with your natural
and your demonstration your love and
faith for your fellow man.
The message which is given to you
is the message of good news for all
of mankind.
(4) The word love is so great
that it is worth setting into
the world for, if that should
be necessary.
(5) Good news to the people as
proclaimed by John the Baptist is the
message of good news that hear it
that we know and be ready for

Jesus Christ. ^{WHEN} ~~Once~~ you have heard this good news, let it be known to those around you, ~~in~~ your living and in your words, because you really do have some good news ~~to~~ the people!

Dear Mr. [Name], I have been thinking of you
very much lately, and I hope you are
well. I have been very busy lately, but
I have managed to find some time to
write you. I hope you will find this
letter interesting.