



STORIES OF LIFE!

The Gospel of Luke

Prepare to Tell His Story! Part 1

Luke 3:1-20

Message #8 of 50 – S782

Sermon given on March 11, 2018



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Prepare to Tell His Story!

Luke 3:1-20

Opening Comments

- Turn to **Luke 3**
- We continue a study through the Gospel of Luke – **The Stories of Life**
- The stories of our life are what add depth, color, and texture to our lives
- Last Sunday we heard Andy Deane's story
- He could have said something like, I was a Christian, but was living selfishly
- But then on September 11th, 2001 God convinced me to live a sacrificial life
- Without the story of how God did that, Andy's story wouldn't likely mean that much to us – probably wouldn't remember it for long
- The story makes the message sticky – it will stick in our memory longer
- This morning we will look at the story of John the Baptist
- We will see that the story of his life had a purpose
- While your story will be different from Andy's or from John's, it has a similar purpose
- Some people have stories that are powerful, like Andy Deane's
- Remember, God is the author of Andy's story
- He is the author of your story too
- God doesn't write useless stories – your story is important, because God has a purpose for it
- Let's pray and then look at what that purpose is
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Prepare to Tell His Story!**
- God is writing your story in a way that allows you to tell the story of His Son
- In fact, the story of your life without Christ is not useful

- Without Christ, the story of your life is wasted, meaningless, and pointless
- One of the great needs of humanity, something virtually all people seek is purpose and meaning
- They try to answer the ‘Why am I here?’ question of life
- Did you know that the answer to that question is the same for everyone on earth? Do you want to hear the answer?

You are here to glorify God by telling the story of Jesus in the power and leading of the Holy Spirit!

- That is why everyone on earth exists
- We all have the same basic purpose, how we will practically fulfill that calling will be different for each of us
- Let’s look at how John did it
- First, some background information
- **Luke 3:1-2**
- Luke gives us details that allow us to date when this took place, between 27-29 AD
- We are not told why he is in the wilderness, but it was not that unusual for Old Testament prophets
- Matthew and Mark also make a point of describing some other features **Mark 1:6**

Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

- Not only was he in an unusual place, and odd in lifestyle, he had a challenging message
 - **Luke 3:3-6**
 - Matthew summarized John’s message **Matthew 3:1-2**
- In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”**
- John said, ‘the kingdom of God is at hand’ right before Jesus appeared on the scene to begin His public ministry
 - Jesus is the living, physical representation of the kingdom of God
 - John is saying the King is coming, and he is telling them how they should respond
 - It is said that in those times when the king would travel that each town had a responsibility to make the journey as smooth as possible for the king

- But John is not referring to external preparations – Jesus would say later **Luke 17:20-21**

Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”

- If you knew Jesus was coming back next Sunday, what would you do?
- How you respond to that says a lot about your faith
- John says the first step to ‘Prepare the way of the Lord’ is to repent
- That is not a popular message today
- To repent is to acknowledge that you are not going the way the Lord would have you to, feeling a sense of sorrow for that, and choosing to turn away from your sin and toward God
- If Jesus was coming back next Sunday, your first action should be to repent - repent of what?
- I see five areas for repentance in verses 4 and 5
- In the prophecy of what the forerunner of the Christ would preach
- First one – **Make His paths straight**
- Too many people are living the life they want to live for themselves, and not the life God wants them to live
- They are wandering through life, following the desires of their own heart and/or flesh
- Repent – find God’s path for your life and get on it – Your King is coming
- Second – **Every valley shall be filled**
- Sometimes life brings us into the ‘valley of the shadow of death’
- We find ourselves in periods of discouragement, depression, or despair – those are natural consequences of the reality that life can be very hard
- But we are not called to live in the ‘valley’ **Psalm 23:4**
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
- God has given us His Word, His Spirit, and His people to lead us out of the valley
- This could also apply to those living with an addiction – you don’t belong in that valley

- If you have pitched a tent in the ‘valley of the shadow of death’ repent and start walking – Your King is coming!
- Third – **Every mountain and hill brought low**
- Everywhere we see the phrase ‘brought low’ it refers to humbling someone or something **Psalm 106:43**

Many times He delivered them; but they rebelled in their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

- One of the things that the Bible teaches that God hates is pride, says that He resists those whose pride rules their life
- Pride is esteeming yourself higher than you should – also a false humility that is a type of pride, thinking yourself lower than you should – true humility is seeing yourself exactly as God sees you
- If you have a pride issue – repent! Your King is coming!
- Fourth thing – **The crooked places shall be made straight**
- You may have heard the phrase ‘straight and narrow’ referring to someone living a good life after living a lesser life – probably comes from **Matthew 7:13-14**

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

- ‘crooked places’ is referring to people who have chosen to live in a way that they know is against God’s will
- Engaging in sex outside of marriage is against God’s will – doesn’t matter what our culture says
- Getting drunk or high – against God’s will – abusing prescription meds – viewing pornography
- Lying, cheating, stealing – you know what applies to you
- Repent from the ‘crooked places’ in your life – Your King is coming!
- Fifth – **The rough ways smooth**
- We live on an unmaintained road in Menifee
- Several years ago, they put down recycled asphalt – it was nice for a while
- But as time goes on without any kind of maintenance, it is getting rougher and rougher
- If the kingdom of God is within us, and we are called to prepare the way for the Lord, some maintenance is required in our spiritual life

- The ‘rough ways’ is pointing to people who have neglected their faith, allowed it to fall into disrepair
- To the church in Ephesus Jesus said **Revelation 2:4-5**
Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.
- Maintain your faith, get connected to God’s Word, God’s Spirit, and God’s people – exercise your faith
- If your faith has gone unmaintained for any length of time, whether it be a day, week, month, year, or years – repent! Your King is coming!
- John called people to repent
- And verse 6 tells us what the result of people repenting and preparing their hearts for the Lord Jesus Christ
- **Luke 3:6**
- People see the reality that God saves by looking at the lives of the people He has saved
- But for them to see it, we have to be willing to repent
- Repentance is not just for really wicked sinners, it is for everyone
- As I grow in my own faith, I sense a greater need for repentance in my own life
- I also experience a greater freedom and joy through repentance, instead of the guilt I used to feel
- God is writing a story through your life – the story of His Son Jesus
- Recently, I said that God is the author of your story, and that you are the pen in His hand
- God is trying to tell the story of His Son through your life
- John is telling us in this text to prepare the way of the Lord
- I am going to share three things you can do to prepare the way
- The first thing – **Prepare your heart!**
- As John said today, we do that first by repenting
- Come back next week and I will tell you what the other two things are
- We are going to partake of Communion today – remembering what Christ did for us on the cross – required because we were far from God because of our sin
- A message like this one today demands some kind of response

- Every true believer should desire to respond to God in repentance
- In fact, if you have no desire to repent, you may not be saved
- Before we go to the Lord's table, we ought to respond to His Spirit
- John called the people to a baptism of repentance – to be baptized as a sign that they had repented – to do something that showed they had repented
- I am going to call you to do something too – not to get baptized, but if you sense the Spirit calling you to repent and you are willing to do that – then show the Lord you are willing by standing
- If you have lived your life your way – repent and stand to your feet – do it right now
- If you have allowed this world to get you down, to make you fearful, to doubt God's goodness – repent and stand to your feet
- If you have let pride have its way in your life, showing up as anger, resentment, unforgiveness, or rebellion – repent and stand to your feet now
- If your pride is keeping you from standing to your feet – repent and stand right now!
- If you are living with sin, sexual immorality, drunkenness, or anything else you know God disapproves of – repent and stand to your feet now
- If you have neglected your faith, if your love of God has cooled – repent and stand to your feet now
- Your King is coming! Are you prepared for His arrival? You start to get prepared by repenting
- I am going to pray
- For those of you who aren't standing – if at any time you sense God telling you to stand – Do it - stand!
- **Pray! You may be seated!**