



**Christian Life Fellowship**  
*Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ*



## **Advent—JESUS Is Coming--Prepare**

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*Rev. David Koch*

### **Introduction:**

Prepare – Jesus is coming. Our text this morning is taken from the Gospel of [Matthew 3:1-11](#). We make many preparations as we get ready to celebrate Christ's first coming as a baby. Some of these preparations are traditions that we have observed over the years. Many of those family traditions go back to previous generations. Observing those traditions is exciting and helps people look forward with anticipation to the familiar activities they remember. One of our traditions as a family in Illinois was that we would start with a hand bell concert and end with a community service during the 12 days of Christmas.

In our series during this advent season, we are talking about preparing ourselves for the second coming of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. In our text this morning we see that John the Baptist has begun his ministry and is preparing people for the ministry of the Messiah - Jesus Christ. At this time, Jesus had been born and grown up and was ready to begin His earthly ministry. John's message called for people to repent. Why did they need to repent? Among the attitudes and behaviors that called for repentance are some of the same ones that we struggle with today. Here are some that come to mind: pride; an unwillingness to change; disobedience to God's word; holding to their religious traditions that didn't change their hearts; not developing a faith structure that trusted who Jesus said He was; and an unwillingness to develop a personal relationship with Christ.

The baptism in water that John administered as the people came was a baptism of repentance. It was a public demonstration of faith and of the fact they had changed their minds and their lives and were now serving God. Being baptized was an indication that they were ready to accept His kingdom as their way of life. They desired to embrace His Lordship and leadership in their lives.

As John was baptizing, some Pharisees and Sadducees came to observe. The Pharisees were a group of prominent leaders who separated themselves from anything that was non-Jewish and carefully followed the law and oral traditions which had been handed down through centuries. The Sadducees were another group of Jewish people who followed only the first five books of the Old Testament. They were descendants from the priests. John demanded of them that they produce fruit to demonstrate they had repented. Neither of these groups was able to claim their heritage as the fruit of their lives or the faith of their ancestors.

Listen beloved, we cannot hope to be prepared for Christ's second coming without experiencing a change of heart. We cannot hope to be ready for His return without showing some type of change in attitude which will

demonstrate itself in fruit. Each of us will stand on our own and the fruit or lack of fruit from our lives will give testimony to the life that is within us.

## **I. Preparation begins with repentance.**

The word “repent” is mentioned 68 times in the Bible. In many places in the Old Testament, repentance had to do with turning away from worshipping something other than God Himself and turning from iniquity, sin and selfishness. It meant being sorry enough to walk away from things that separated them from God.

In the New Testament, repentance means to think differently. It means to grasp with understanding so that your mind and your will are impacted. Jesus is coming back. He hasn't forgotten us. He will not abandon us nor go back on His word. Because He hasn't come back yet, God is simply giving more time for everyone to come to that change of heart, that place of turning from sin and walking with God we call repentance. **2 Peter 3:9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent.**

Those who are His followers have prepared themselves for His coming. They are eager for Him to gather His bride to rule and reign with Him. Still we must remember that there are those who have not yet repented and are not prepared to meet Him. The story of the five wise and five foolish virgins comes to mind. They all were expecting the bridegroom to come. They had all been invited to the celebration. They all went out to meet him but only five had adequately prepared so they were ready for any delay. The wise not only trimmed their lamps for light in the darkness but they took a supply of oil with them so they would not be left in the dark.

Preparation has to take place before the event, not after it. How silly for a student to prepare and study for a final exam after the exam had been given.

## **II. Preparation is shown by fruitfulness.**

God wants us to be fruitful. Our lives should give evidence of joy, peace, hope, love and life. John the Baptist required that those who were being baptized showed some evidence that they had repented.

Repentance here would imply that they had a reversal of decision. People in Jesus' day were no different than people in our day. It does no good to say one thing with our words and then live another way with our actions. Do your actions match your words? What you say is so important! When we talk, our words need to line up with what is in our hearts.

### **A. Humility is one of the fruits of repentance.**

Jesus was humble. He assumed the role of a servant. He set aside His rights and limited Himself to humanity so we might see God's love. If we want to win people – we must have a humble attitude – not that I am better than you because I am a believer and you are an unbeliever. A humble attitude is founded on the quality of God's love and fostered by the impact of God's word.

John the Baptist called out the pride in the people who were coming to be baptized by him. We see that heritage or the religious acts of others is not the fruit that John looked for or considered valid for repentance.

### **B. Change is one of the fruits of repentance.**

There has to be a difference between us and the world in which we live. I believe that we need to be culturally relevant but we also need to be true to the word of God. Jesus was a friend of sinners but he did not sin to win them. When we look like the world and act like the world and the world cannot tell any difference in our patterns of thought or our behavior or attitude, then they will see no reason to embrace what we say we are living for.

Culture today is looking for those who are genuine: people of their word; people of character; people of love; people of integrity; people of honesty; and people of joy. We cannot hope to repent without there being a different direction and a different focus. Change is what happens when we become a devoted follower of Jesus. We are no longer the same. We are transformed or changed by our minds and thoughts being renewed.

The church in America has for too long presumed that you can be a “Christian” even with absolutely no evidence of that in your life. Henry Blackaby, author of Experiencing God, recently noted, “There are just as many abortions inside the churches as outside the churches. There’s only a one percent difference in gambling inside the churches as outside the churches. George Barna did a survey of 152 separate items comparing the lost world and the churches and he said there is virtually no difference between the two.” That is a serious accusation.

We cannot live our lives like we did before we became a follower of Christ. **2 Cor. 5:17** **What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!**

#### **C. Obedience is one of the fruits of repentance.**

We are called to be active in our obedience. When we look at the story of Christ’s first coming, we see obedience in the lives of the characters in the story. Mary was obedient to the angel of the Lord when He spoke to her about God’s plan for her life. Joseph was obedient in responding to the angel of the Lord and took Mary to be his wife, even though she was pregnant. The shepherds were obedient and went to see where Jesus was born as the angel had instructed them. The wise men were obedient after they found Christ. They went home another way and did not go

#### **Conclusion:**

My challenge to you this morning as we come to the table of the Lord is to evaluate if you see the fruit of repentance in your life. Evaluate if humility, change, obedience and relationships are being seen in your life. **1 Cor. 12:26** For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

back to King Herod and tell him where they had found Jesus.

Obedience is a demonstration of love and of faith. Obeying God’s word is part of preparing for His coming. Obedience can save us from danger, from temptation, from disaster, from pain. **John 14:21** **“Those who obey my commandments are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them, and I will love them. And I will reveal myself to each one of them.”**

Practicing the discipline of obedience in our lives now is an important preparation for ruling and reigning with Christ in eternity. If we choose not to obey Him now what will be different with our responses to His will after He has returned?

#### **D. Relationship is one of the fruits of repentance.**

**John 15:5** - **“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”** As we abide in Him, His life is that which brings fruit from our lives. If there is no fruit, there is no life.

This is talking about relationships. If you don’t know someone and have not developed a relationship with them, you probably won’t want to spend much time with them. The same is true with our relationship with Christ. Why would we want to spend an eternity with someone when we never took the time to develop a relationship with Him.