

SERMON NOTES: DEC. 8TH
SCRIPTURE READINGS... Isalah 40: 3-11 Matthew 11: 1-15

A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS...John the Baptist He stands between us and Christmas, blocking our way till we get real before God, till we admit our SPIRITUAL POVERTY. John knew that he was a SET UP MAN setting the stage; a ROADSIGN pointing us the right way. Just a MESSENGER, but not the MESSAGE itself! He even said that he was unworthy to loosen the SANDALS of the one coming. John didn't even know his name.

ELIJAH RETURNS...John was a sight for sore eyes: a wild-eyed man, who was decked out in CAMEL-SKIN LEATHER, the same outfit Elijah wore 800 years before. Prophets declared that Elijah would prepare the way of the Messiah and in more ways than he knew, John fulfilled that role. Despite his wild/wooly ways, people found John irresistible, and they came out in droves to hear him preach and be baptized.

HIS CORE MESSAGE...his words were like a HAND GRENADE tossed into a crowded room. A minute with John, you knew God meant business. No respecter of persons, John was broken record, always repeating the same message

Repent, be baptized for your sins. God's Kingdom is near"

We associate repentance with preachers pounding pulpits: a scare tactic used to get people saved. Repent means to TURN/LIVE. It wasn't a THREAT; it was an invitation John offered in love. He wasn't stirring up guilt; he was offering hope, spreading excitement. God was doing NEW THING. John forces us to be honest about our lives. We sin, not just in theory but in practice. There are truths we need to hear whether we like it or not. See why people flocked to John: he gave them a chance to COME CLEAN, to TRY AGAIN.

GOD DOING A NEW THING...whatever God was doing, they wanted in. John cries, "repent" There is no approaching a holy God without repentance. Being Christian is to live a certain way. Jesus is that way/life. No matter who we are, or what we've done/failed to do, God isn't finished with us yet. Whatever gets in our way of serving Jesus, God calls us to turn from it. God wants people whose loyalty is true, who love him as much on MONDAY as they do on SUNDAY. God is still doing new things. But it must be chosen. Before it can be chosen, it must be imagined. This is the gift John gives us: the PROPER FOCUS OF FAITH

Look to Jesus, he is the way. Bear fruit like him.