

WordOne Bible Study

Preparing the Way for Jesus

by David M. Benson

Text: Mark 1:1-8 for the Second Sunday in Advent, Lectionary Series B

OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

1. Explore the role of John the Baptist in preparing for the Messiah.
2. Find ways they can be prepared to receive Jesus in their lives.

GROUP GUIDELINES

Break into groups of four to six people. The person in each group who got their Christmas shopping done the earliest is the leader and should help keep the discussion going.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

As a warm up, think about the ways in which you would prepare to receive a famous person as a guest in your home. Make a list of all the things that would need to be done in order for you to feel ready for this person's visit. When everyone is done, have members share their lists.

GETTING INTO SCRIPTURE

1. Read aloud Mark 1:1-8. Have each member of the group read at least one verse, then discuss the following questions:
 - a. Why do you think Mark would begin his Gospel with the words, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"?
 - b. What does he mean by "beginning"?
 - c. According to the passage from Isaiah (quoted by Mark), what was the purpose and mission of the "messenger" (verse 2) that God would send?
 - d. How would he carry out his mission?
 - e. Describe the appearance of John the Baptist (verse 6). What other biblical person did he resemble? (See 2 Kings 1:7-8 for help.)
 - f. Why would this be significant? (See Malachi 4:5-6.)
2. What about John?
 - a. What did John the Baptist do to fulfill the role of forerunner of the Messiah?
 - b. What did he ask the people to do in preparation for the coming of Christ (verse 4)?
 - c. What was John the Baptist's attitude in regard to the Messiah (verse 7)?
 - d. What did he predict about the ministry of Christ (verse 8)?
3. Repentance
 - a. What role has repentance played in your life of faith?
 - b. Is it possible to have true faith in Jesus without having repentance? Why or why not?
 - c. Why is repentance an important part of preparing to receive Jesus through faith?
4. Baptism
 - a. In what ways is Baptism a good "physical analogy" of repentance, forgiveness and faith? (Read Romans 6:1-3)
 - b. What can you do to renew your Baptism? Why is this important?

REINFORCING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED

1. If you were to write the "good news according to you," how would you begin it and who would be the John the Baptist in your life?
2. Based on what you have discussed in this study, what steps can you take right now to be better prepared for the celebration of Christ's birth this year? How can you help others to prepare for Christ in their lives?

CLOSING

Close your study with prayer. Ask God to help you “hear the voice of the one crying out in the wilderness” and truly prepare your hearts to be the dwelling place for the Christ child through repentance and faith.

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