

DEEP PREP GUIDE

SCRIPTURE | Luke 3:1-22

BOTTOM LINE

God invites us to prepare the way for Jesus to disrupt the world.

MEMORY VERSE

Luke 3:4

LIFE APP

Remove the barriers you put between your heart and God.

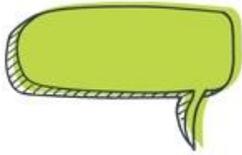
The story of the Gospels is the story of how God becomes “king.” Waaaay back in Genesis 1-2 we have a picture of creation where God is all in all and things are as they should be: humanity is in perfect relationship with humanity, humanity is in perfect relationship with God, with nature, with each other, and so on. THEN, one of the most profound events in the Bible happens: Humanity decides to rebel against God. Of course, when you read the text it doesn’t seem like much, but essentially what happened when Adam and Eve decided to take a bite of the fruit is that they decided that they wanted the role of God in their lives. They wanted to run the show.

The rest of the Bible is the story of the way that God deals with this rebellion on the battlefield of our hearts and out in the world. One of the primary ways that God works to deal with the issue is by enlisting the very people responsible for it: Israel. Through Israel, God begins to address the effects of rebellion in our hearts and in the world. Unfortunately, the power of sin is strong (anyone else thinking about the Ring of Power from Lord of the Rings here?!) and Israel by and large decides to go it’s own way and to be like the nations it was meant to reach.

When the curtain comes up in the Gospels, you’ve got many different ‘kingdoms’ that more or less defy God. The most tragic of which being Israel. In the first few verses of chapter 3 the author is giving a “time stamp” that for a reader who would have been dialed in with the message of Jesus (God’s kingdom) would have seen as a mess. In vv2-6 we’re given a little more “color” to the situation. We’re told that the “word of God” comes to John “in the wilderness” suggesting that God’s Word isn’t followed in the temple and that, in-fact, it needs to be reintroduced to the people in power in the temple.

John then quotes Isaiah and in doing so sort of traces the current sorry state of affairs waaaaay back to before Israel was in exile. In other words, Israel has been dysfunctional for a long time and it is time to get things fixed because God is coming to town (Jesus) to “right the ship.” So, John tells them to prepare the way by repenting of what they have been doing.

The first word of repentance that John gives them is about their heart. If you remember the Joel passage from back in December, this is similar. The second word of repentance is about their actions. They need to start acting like the people of God. Thankfully, there are some people that listen and respond to the message, but most people don’t. That is why John goes on to threaten Israel with being “chopped off at the root” and “thrown into the fire.” (spoiler alert, this happens in 70ad when the temple is destroyed.)

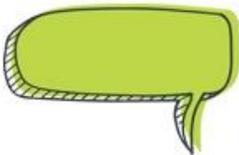


TENSION

It is important to read this text where it is in the flow of the story. We live post resurrection and post Pentecost. Our relationship with God is different than Israel's relationship with God because of Jesus. So, the fire and brimstone that John lays down at the feet of Israel isn't ours to bear. However, inside all of us there is still a "tiny rebellion" against God that rages on that needs to be handled. Our theme for the week is "**prepare.**" Our Bottom Line is that **God invites us to prepare the way for Jesus to disrupt the world.**

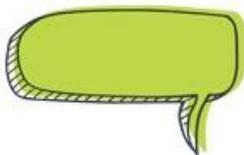
The tension is that in order for us to prepare the way for Jesus to disrupt our world, we must first prepare our hearts by doing as John said: "make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. [so that] And all people will see God's salvation."

Many times our hearts can look like the scene John paints here. We have erased paths, dug deep valleys, raised up intractable mountains, and made crooked the roads that lead to our hearts. We don't go on the offensive against God, but we make it all but impossible for God to work on us. We don't prepare ourselves to be available for God to use us to disrupt the world. In other words, we won't let God disrupt us. The challenge for this week will be to look for the things (relationships, feelings, thoughts, actions, situations) that we place between us and God.



TEXT [CONTEXT]

The whole first part of the Gospel of Luke is sort of like God playing reveille for Israel. God wants them to "wake up" and get with the program. As we know from reading the rest of the gospel, the results are a mixed bag. Most of the people that turn to follow Jesus are the marginalized whereas the people who continue to go their own way are the people in power.



TRUTH

The truth or the "good news" to be found in this text is that since time immemorial, God has pursued us when we have pushed away. One of the most damaging relationship dynamics that I think kids deal with today is that feel that they can do things that will cause people to "leave them." They worry about that with parents, friends, and important figures in their lives. To that pain we are able to tell them that God will never leave them. In fact, God will pursue their hearts even to death. There is nothing we can do

that will separate us from the love of God: there is no path too worn, valley too low, mountain too high, or road too crooked that God's love won't find us.