



## True Repentance

Luke 3:7-14

- Went with our youth group to Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge for the winter retreat. We did all the things – stayed in a cabin, rode a mountain coaster, bought homemade fudge and a foot-long corndog at Fannie Farkle’s. And we fought the massive crowds.
- There was a point when I was driving in downtown Gatlinburg that I was really glad the church logo wasn’t on the side of the bus. I had to repent for some thoughts and my attitude as people who couldn’t drive were going from one part of town to another.
- What is clear in the Gospels is that the first part of Jesus’ life and ministry and John the Baptist go hand in hand.

- One of the signature aspects of John's ministry was repentance. As he was led to preach, God called him to preach a message of repentance. Most of the time, he shared messages that were sharp and convicting.
- That is what is recorded in Luke 3. Luke records that John went about preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.
  - o This was not for the purpose of salvation. That would come by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus.
  - o The word for remission here means – letting go and releasing. Releasing and letting go of your sinful ways. It was symbolic of their commitment to pursue God's plan for their lives.
- Jesus comes to be baptized by John. When you compare this event in the other Gospels, it is clear that Jesus' baptism wasn't for repentance. It was given as a model for all of us to follow. The Father says this is His son with whom He is well pleased. He told John this was the right thing to do.
- For us as Christians, there is a need to know where we are in our walk with Christ and what needs to change in response to that. Repentance is not a bad word. Repentance is at the heart of following Christ.

**Main Point: There are fruits of repentance that should be evident in followers of Christ.**

- In its simplest form – repentance is making a U-turn. It's turning away from your current trajectory and instead go in a different direction.
- C.S. Lewis
  - o "Now repentance is no fun at all. It is something much harder than merely eating humble pie. It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have

been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means undergoing a kind of death... Only a bad person needs to repent: only a good person can repent perfectly."

- There are three specific groups of people that John called to repentance here that I want to focus on. These are all areas that we need to evaluate in our own lives.

## I. Generosity

- a. In this passage, John was engaging with the crowd by answering their questions in relation to what he was teaching.
- b. He talks about the need to produce good spiritual fruit – fruits of repentance. It was not enough to rely on what had been done in the past with their ancestors. Just because their ancestors walked closely with God didn't mean they would automatically have a close walk with God.
- c. They asked him – what should we do then? The first lesson he teaches here is about generosity.
- d. He said that the one who has resources should share it with those who don't. There is an application here physically, of course. We should be generous people with out resources. When God blesses us, we should seek to be a blessing to others.
- e. There is also a very real spiritual application as well.
- f. God's Word had been shared with the Israelites. That's who John was initially addressing here. Because they had been so blessed by God in receiving God's Word, they should be willing to share it with others.

- g. The natural response in this world is selfishness. We may be selfish for a lot of reasons – survival mechanism, sinful desires, hoarding for a rainy day.
- h. But we have to remember, when we act out of our own self-interest, we are showing distrust in the sovereignty of God.
- i. To act selflessly is to say it's ok to put my desires to the side because I know God will take care of me in the long run.

## II. Honesty

- a. Tax collectors came to John to be baptized in Luke 3.
- b. They came to take part in this baptism of repentance, and they ask John what they should do.
- c. Notice this about those that were asking these questions – when they come to be baptized, they ask John what they should do in addition to being baptized.
- d. *The act of baptism wasn't, in and of itself, an act of repentance. There needed to be changes in how they lived their lives. The same is true today.*
- e. To the tax collectors who came to be baptized John said in VERSE 13 they should “collect no more than what you have been ordered to.”
- f. In other words, earn an honest living.

i. The Romans outsourced tax collection through a "tax-farming" process.

Wealthy contractors (often Roman elites) bid for the right to collect taxes in a region, paying a fixed amount upfront to Rome. They then hired local subordinates (usually Jews in Judea) to do the actual collecting.

ii. These local tax collectors had to remit a predetermined quota to Rome but could charge **whatever amount they wanted** beyond that. Any excess

was their personal profit. This created strong incentives for overcharging, extortion, and fraud—practices that were notoriously common.

- iii. It was government fraud before government fraud was cool.
- g. A sure sign of repentance is when we seek to live honest lives. Some people feel convicted when they get caught. But it's another thing to try and do what is right even when no one is watching.

### **III. Contentment**

- a. Soldiers in the crowd also come to John and asked they should do as well?
- b. John said that they should not take any money by force and be content with their wages.
- c. This act of repentance gets to the motives of our heart. It especially addresses one of the most spiritually revealing circumstances in life – what do we do when we are given power.
- d. These soldiers had power to do things that other people could not do. They had authority over others, and some had used it to their own advantage.
- e. The real spiritual test isn't when we are stripped away from all our worldly possessions. The real spiritual test comes when we have been given many worldly possessions.
- f. The real test is in those moments of power and comfort.
- g. What will we do when we have been given influence, power, possessions, or authority?
- h. Will we use those resources for our benefit or will we use it for the glory of God and the good of others.

**IV.** Luke 15

- a.** Parable of the Prodigal son. The younger son demanded his inheritance early. He goes out and he wastes it on whatever the world could throw his way. He ends up with nothing.
- b.** Comes to his senses. Decided he would go back and to his father as a hired servant.
- c.** Rehearses his confession in his mind: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”
- d.** Instead – His father runs to him and embraces him. “This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is now found.” No lecture. Just joy that his son had repented and returned.