

In our scripture lesson this morning we read of a prominent figure in all four Gospels – John the Baptist. John the Baptist as his name indicates called his people – the Jewish nation to repentance through the public physical cleansing of the body. The theology underpinning was that the public cleansing was a stamp or an outward sign of what God was already doing in the heart. That when we respond to God’s grace we can repent and go to God from all that separated us – time, money, anger, etc. that we would by God’s grace now positioned to walk more faithfully with God.

It is important to note that Baptism for the Jewish people was already part of their understanding. But it was the Gentile, the non-Jews who converted into Judaism the belief in One God – it is those who were not born as a Jew that had to be cleaned, washed, prior to formally entering into the Jewish worshiping community, worshiping the one and true God. The implication of this understanding is clear, it is we who are Gentile are in need of cleansing in the Old Covenant understanding – we had to be washed/baptized. But this “nut” John the Baptist – and let’s be clear he was a nut. Yes, John the Baptist was a prophet, a man of God, forerunner of modern day evangelist....but again he was a nut, sanctified nut! He fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah hung out in the desert eating the locust...honey ok, but locust? John preached a difficult message, during a difficult time in the history of his people, and he preached this message in a difficult environment – all of which goes against any “church growth model”

“You brood of Vipers” Who warned you to flee from the upcoming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, “we have Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire....wow! Luke 3:7-9

There response? Vs. 18 “What should we do?”

Let me get this straight....a man roaming the dessert outside of Jerusalem, eating locust and honey wearing according to Matthew's gospel wearing clothes made of Camel hair, telling anybody within ear shot – you think things are bad in Jerusalem; we are occupied by the Romans, we lack complete freedom in our own Temple, we still wait for the promised Messiah,..... But those things though true pale in comparison to the fact that you individually and we as a people need to repent for our ethnic pride, our uncaring spirit for one another, and towards others – even our uncaring spirit for enemies...and here's the kicker that John the Baptist shares - “if you don't turn away or plot another course” for that is what repentance means “and began producing or living by God's grace we as a people will be struck down and you along with future generations will miss out on the coming Messiah, the coming Kingdom Wow. Unlike you and I who would say ‘wait a minute how dare you talk to me that way...There **response?**

Vs. 18 “What should we do? 3 times – crowd, tax collectors, soldiers

I believe these are the words that our God desires to hear from a people belonging to God...What should we do Lord, together. In my brief overview of scripture and of modern moves of God in church history these words rein supreme “What should we do?

- **Disciples during the 50 days leading up to Pentecost**
- **Disciples asking Jesus Feeding the 5,000**
- **Disciples unable to heal the demon possessed man**
- **Exodus journey the people upon falling away would ask of Yahweh "What should we do?**

John the Baptist response is clear

- **SHARE/MERCY (Crowd) – if you have two tunics share the one with the person who has none. (it was common to have only one tunic)**
- **BE HONEST/JUST (Tax Collectors) – do not abuse your position of power over the powerless.**
- **BE CONTENT/HUMBLE (Soldiers) - Be satisfied with what you have.**

John the Baptist speaking to a people, a generation no longer in touch with the world, with creation around them, he boldly rather confrontational even - stop living as if there is no tomorrow – stop living only for yourself. Live like tomorrow matters for you and future generations – all people, don't you know that the King, the Messiah, the deliver, the Prince of Peace is coming. REPENT before God, be baptized/be washed and live differently....or else! For the generation of John the Baptist, they had forgotten the words of Micah 6:8 which answers the question of what should we do?

8 He (God) has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

John the Baptist response echo's the words from the prophet Micah.....

- **SHARE/MERCY (Crowd) – if you have two tunics share the one with the person who has none**
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In essence what both prophets are naming for us today is that you and I as people of faith, who worship the one and only true God, our God who sent us Jesus the Son of God into

the world to die for our sins, and to live a life that we are called to daily become more like by the power of the Holy spirit – to walk in this world and reflect that which was in Christ now dwells in each of us we will

- **SHARE/Mercy (Crowd) – perhaps not our tunics but share our shoes, our time, our clothing, our networks, our household, our education with the one/community and the person who has none**
- **BE HONEST/JUST (Tax Collectors) – do not abuse your position of power over the powerless.**
- **BE CONTENT/Humble (Soldiers) - Be satisfied with what you have.**

As people of faith we often limit our understanding of how we walk/live in these challenging understanding to a personal relationship at best – in other words we say pastor I will work on these things in my personal life, in my personal faith walk – and that is an appropriate starting point. Indeed when John the Baptist he was indeed calling individuals in right relationship through the repentance of sins before God. Share what you have, be honest and just with those who are powerless, be content for change but he was also talking to a people, a community – for individuals do not live in isolation but they live in communities. Therefore John the Baptist as was Micah wanted the community of faith as a whole to repent from separatism, egotism, elitism, racism – all of which separated them from one another and even more so separation from God realizing the depth of their despair they didn't say what should I do rather the response was corporate:

Vs. 18 “What should we do?”

“Is this not the question of the day in the area of Creation Care? What should we do?”

What should we do? With

¹The fact that in 2000, 20% of the world’s pop.....

- **Has 85% of the world’s wealth and income**
- **Used 88% of the world’s natural resources**
- **Generated 75% of the world pollution**

What should we do? With

- **²The fact that though the environmental problems we face on this earth are vast and diverse – the one overwhelming communality is that all of them (global warming, green house effect, polluted streams, landfills, food shortages) can be traced back to human activity and consumption. (over consumption, 20th century was the hottest in last 600 years)**

Another way of understanding this is that our Ecological Footprint is leaving immeasurable damage on the landscape for future generations. It would be comparable to my size 13 foot print and my daughter’s petite footprint.

Ecological footprint (EF) analysis is a measure of human demand on the Earth's **ecosystems** and **natural resources**. It compares human consumption of natural resources with planet Earth's **ecological** capacity to regenerate them. It is an estimate of the amount of biologically productive land and sea area needed to regenerate (if possible) the resources a human **population** consumes and to absorb and render harmless the corresponding waste, given prevailing **technology** and current understanding. Using this assessment, it is possible to estimate how many planet Earths it would take to support humanity if everybody lived a given lifestyle. While the *ecological footprint* term is widely used, methods of measurement vary quantitatively.

If Mahtma Gandhi is correct and I believe he is when he said that our “Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed.”

¹ Moyer Jamie “Earth Trek – Celebrating and Sustaining God’s Creation, pg 156

² Moyer Jamie “Earth Trek – Celebrating and Sustaining God’s Creation, pg 156

Similar to those surrounding John the Baptist in our text we must collectively ask as children of all creation

What should we do then?³

- **SHARE/MERCY (Crowd) – if you have two tunics share the one with the person who has none**
 - Cook together with friends (Monday is Taco night at the Flores home)
 - Avoid wasting food – mom and dad were right
 - Grow and plant your own veg/plants – as we began this past Friday at Housman Rec Peace Garden
 -
- **BE HONEST/JUST (Tax Collectors) – do not abuse your position of power over the powerless.**
 - Advocate/write letters ? (state rep 2, 5, 10)
 - Be informed – what you don't know can kill you. Know where your food comes from, buy local (Thursday the farmers market reopened for the season)
 - Be honest about what you can do – turn off lights, have prepared meals together, etc.
- **BE CONTENT Soldiers) - Be satisfied with what you have.**
 - **5 R's (clothing, rain water, compost, share a ride, walk, public) recycle, reuse, repair, reduce. Reverence (get your head out of the clouds)**

Conclusion

5For John baptized with^[a] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." **6**So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" **7**He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. **8**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." **9**After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. **10**They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. **11**"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This

³ Moyer Jamie "Earth Trek – Celebrating and Sustaining God's Creation (various pages)

same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1

What should we do?

Let's get our collective heads out of the clods and look around right here and Go into the world.....

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