

**Prepare the way of the Lord!**

Luke 3: 1-6

Rev. Ed Hoekstra

*An Angel's perspective... (Rick Smith begins here)*

*Good Morning. My name is Gilbert. I am one of god's Angels. Woah. Hold up! It's not what you think. I am not that important. I just sing in the choir of angels (look over shoulder to choir) no offence. You sound pretty good too. I mean I am not as important as let's say Gabriel. Now that is an important Angel. Did you know that his name means 'God's Hero'. Which makes complete sense because He is one of Gods archAngels. No not one of ... He is THE Angel. He is God's special messenger angel. No back up singing for him uh-uh. Go ahead look it up. On several occasions in the Bible he has been given the job of coming to earth to give important announcements and tell of special events. He chatted with David to help him understand some weird visions he was having. And again with Zachariah to tell him of the improbable birth of his son John and the biggest message EVER. He told Mary that she was going to give birth to the son of God.*

*Okay that one....he can keep. I wouldn't want to tell this young virgin that life as she knew it was about to change for her. What must she'd been thinking? Still it WAS awesome news. He probably just went in, shared the news, and got her on board. That is just how good he is at that kind thing. Can you imagine? (Pretending to be all important) " Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."*

*Okay, that would have been some special message to deliver. Full of hope, peace, joy and love and long lasting impact. I wonder if he realized just how important that news was? **Here is someone we read about in our scripture today who really knew how important that news was! This man is John the Baptist and he really wants you to understand how vital to life it is and how it important it is to be prepared for this Good News!***

**Luke 3: 1-4a (Rev. Ed Hoekstra)**

## The Proclamation of John the Baptist

**3** In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler<sup>[a]</sup> of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler<sup>[b]</sup> of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler<sup>[c]</sup> of Abilene, <sup>2</sup>during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, <sup>4</sup>as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord, **(Luke 3: 4b-6 Liam Buckley)**  
make his paths straight.

<sup>5</sup>Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;

<sup>6</sup>and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

**(Rev. Ed Hoekstra reads to the end)**

When you prepare for your baby to be born - it changes your life – you are totally responsible for this little person. It is not about you anymore – it is about the baby! Parents will vary in terms of how much they are willing to set their own agenda aside for the sake of the baby. Whoever you do, the baby will change your life.

Every year during Advent, we prepare for the birth of the baby Jesus. Jesus is the Prince of Peace who declared that love (not conflict) has the final word in the world. To receive the peace of the baby Jesus, John the Baptist tells us in no uncertain terms to ‘Prepare the Way’. He is not mincing words – he wants to make himself perfectly clear – do you get it?

If effect, John the Baptist is saying that in preparation you start with examining yourself and seeing how you are blocking the peace and Love of Jesus from coming into the world and into your life. Therefore, in preparation for receiving Jesus, John the Baptist was preaching a ‘*Baptism of Repentance for the forgiveness of sins*’. What does John the Baptist mean here?

In Baptism, we accept the fact that we are unconditionally loved by God (God’s grace). Also in Baptism we confess that we are not perfect- that we sin and we need the saving love of God to redeem us. In other words, *we have rough spots that need to be planed. We have crooked places that need to be made straight and sharp edges that need to be smoothed out.* Changing our world and changing the bigger world starts with ourselves. We too often think that the World’s problems are the fault of others (not me). But, we are so powerless to change on our own strength. In acknowledging Jesus unconditional/forgiving love towards you, your fears are diminished and you are prepared to receive the gift of the baby Jesus and you can relax in His unfailing, steadfast love. To our own detriment, we often live as though the world revolves around us. We forget that we did not create ourselves – our life is a gift from God. Integral to relaxing in God’s steadfast love is not to take oneself too seriously – rather, take God seriously!

With arrogance, and being judgmental of others we are not prepared to receive the baby Jesus (the religious leaders of the day were a prime example of this arrogant attitude). Similar to how you receive your own baby in your home - it’s not about you anymore – it’s about the baby Jesus! When we surrender our lives, our fears and worries to Christ, we are better prepared to receive the Love of the baby Jesus who can then empower us towards reconciliation and Peace within ourselves and with our neighbours. Let’s submit ourselves, be nourished by his Steadfast love (Grace) and worship Him. **(Liam Buckley as John the Baptist shouts: “Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord!”** Amen.

**Congregation Sings: Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord!**