

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

MARCH 13 - 17, 2023

Welcome to the

Story

Lenten Series 2.26 - 3.26



MONDAY

Read [Isaiah 40:1-5](#); [Mark 1:1-8](#); [Luke 3:1-18](#)

Preparing the Way

How did John the Baptist prepare the way for Jesus? John's baptism was a baptism of repentance preparing the way for God's Son, Jesus.

We all need God's help to smooth the rough roads and straighten the crooked paths we experience in this life. He clears away obstacles in our life and constructs a highway for the arrival of God's Messiah. *"Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain"* (Isaiah 40:4).

People came to John to be baptized (made clean on the inside) in the Jordan River. They wanted to show their seriousness toward God by confessing and repenting of their sins. But some came with wrong or mixed motives. Some wanted to "check a box" or add to their religious reputation. John challenged them saying, *"Produce fruit, then, in keeping with repentance"* (Luke 3:8). *"What then should we do?"* they asked (v. 10).

To help them, John gave answers to their questions: *"Share extra clothes and extra food."* *"Don't collect more taxes than required"* *"Don't extort money or falsely accuse"* (vv. 11, 13, 14 paraphrased). In other words, don't expect to get clean and not change. The proof of a changed heart is the *"fruit"* of changed behavior (Matthew 12:33).

The Jordan River may seem like an inauspicious place for Jesus to come and be one in the crowd to be baptized by John. Even John thought so. What was Jesus doing there? After all, He was righteous already and needed no change in His heart or behavior. He had nothing to repent of doing.

But this was the place and the time for Jesus to identify with us in this very baptism. And this is where the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove. His Father declared His pleasure in Him. His ministry began here and continues all around the world. Together let's think about baptism as we look forward to "Baptism Sunday."

QUESTIONS

How do/did we prepare the way for God's coming into our lives and into the lives of others? How does God do these things for us (making our paths straight and clearing away the obstacles)

PRAYERS

For Shepherd's Pantry

Hundreds of households drive through Shepherd's Pantry each week in need of food, clothing, and household items. With the high cost of living, these families need Shepherd's Pantry more than ever. Pray that we can continue being a blessing to the neighbors in need and a place for hope and comfort.

TUESDAY

Read [Luke 3:16, 24:45-49](#); [Colossians 2:12](#); [Galatians 2:20](#)

Promise

God the Son will baptize us in God the Spirit. There are no half measures with God. He is “all in” on us, so we can go “all in” on Him. He identified with us, so we can identify with Him. God the Son will baptize us in God the Spirit. This is the **promise** of John the Baptist (Luke 3:16). This is the **promise** of God the Father (Luke 24:49).

Jesus was incarnated into our world by being conceived in Mary’s womb. The eternal Word of God came into our world and one of its cultures (Roman-occupied Judea). He was baptized by John the Baptist at the start of His ministry. He also underwent the “*baptism of suffering*” by crucifixion (Luke 12:50) followed by resurrection. So we are baptized into the death of ourselves to life in Him (Colossians 2:12; Galatians 2:20). We are made new.

Churches practice the sacrament of baptism in obedience to Jesus (Matthew 28:19). This is an essential aspect of being a church. The reality symbolized by the sacrament of baptism is even more real than the sacrament. The reality is that Jesus immerses us into His life, His way, and His truth. Jesus immerses us into the kingdom of God and His will (righteousness). He immerses us in the Holy Spirit. God stands behind this **promise**.

Jesus immerses us into the community of faith (His Church and His Bride). We die to ourselves to have this life. In fact, He puts us to death so that we may have this life (His eternal life). God also stands behind this promise to help us.

Because of all this, we are compelled to immerse ourselves in prayer, in the Scriptures, and into the community of faith. In his book, *The Holy Longing*, Roland Rolheiser points out that Jesus' incarnation did not stop at His ascension to heaven. His incarnation continues in us (His Body, the Church).

QUESTIONS

How are you being immersed and immersing yourself into prayer, the Scriptures and your local church?

PRAYERS

For Shepherd's Pantry

Through the Shepherd's Pantry warehouse in Irwindale, homeless individuals receive nonperishable, ready-to-eat food three days a week. Without personal storage capacity, cooking ability, or refrigeration, this helps them with two basic needs: food and dignity. Continue to pray with and for those living without a roof over their heads.

WEDNESDAY

Read [Luke 2:25-35, 8:1-15](#)

Prayer

Infant baptism/dedication is a prayer on the part of the parents and the community of faith that the child will grow up in God's presence. It's like the planting of a seed, and the prayer is that the seed will germinate at the proper time and be planted in good soil, producing a crop of 30, 60, even a hundred times more than was sown (Luke 8:8).

Infant baptism, like dedication, is also a commitment on the part of the parents and the believing community to nurture and nourish that child in love and faith. When Simeon held the infant Jesus in dedication and circumcision, he may have prayed like this: "May this child fulfill all His God-given purpose," and/or spoken a prophecy: "This child will fulfill all His God-given purpose." This prayer of baptism is appropriate for any and all infants.

It is said of John the Baptist that he was full of the Holy Spirit while still unborn in his mother Elizabeth's womb (Luke 1:15, 41). Jesus was Spirit-filled from eternity past. God's timing is different with each of us.

We have been taught that the rite of circumcision for infant boys on the eighth day in the Old Covenant became the sacrament of baptism for both boys and girls, men and women in the New Covenant.

My mother arranged for her husband (my father) and her firstborn (me as an infant) to be baptized on the same day in a church that we were new to attending. She was a praying woman; my father told me she spent hours on her knees by the bed some nights. Once she took me to a praying lady's home to show me her long daily prayer list. I believe she did all these things to impress upon me the importance of prayer (Matthew 6:6).

QUESTIONS

What children do you pray for and nurture in love on their faith journey? Who has prayed for you and helped you in your faith journey? Have you thanked them or thanked God for them recently?

PRAYERS

For Shepherd's Pantry

One way we are able to meet the needs of seniors, people with health and mobility issues, and those who lack transportation is by delivering food to them. This program would not be possible without the support of wonderful volunteer drivers and Door Dash partners. Pray for more volunteer drivers and more funding to continue this partnership with Door Dash.

THURSDAY

Read [John 3:1-17, 5:24, 6:63, 10:10](#); [Luke 9:23-24](#); [Hebrews 2:10-11](#)

Point of It All

Baptism is a marker for the start of a new life. Nicodemus came to Jesus under cover of night. Their conversation veered into how real life in the kingdom of God begins. Jesus tells Nicodemus, *“Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... Unless he is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”* (probably a reference, at least in part, to baptism) (John 3:3, 5).

Two chapters later, Jesus says, *“Whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life”* (John 5:24).

Once that life begins, it is an all-consuming occupation. Jesus said, *“If anyone wants to follow in My footsteps, he must give up all right to himself, carry his cross every day and keep close behind Me. For the man who wants to save his life will lose it, but the man who loses his life for My sake will save it. For what is the use of a man gaining the whole world if he loses or forfeits his own soul?”* (Luke 9:23-24).

Roland Rolheiser, in his book *The Holy Longing*, claims there are four non-negotiables for a balanced Christian life:

1. A personal relationship with Jesus in prayer and personal integrity.
2. A caring for the poor, disadvantaged people.
3. A heart of gratitude, love and joy.
4. Participation (involvement) in a church.

Our life in Jesus has a past, present and future to it. This present tense aspect is *spiritual formation*. Our pastor is keen on leading us to fully cooperate with Jesus in our spiritual formation for ourselves and for the sake of others (Hebrews 2:10-11).

In John 6:63, Jesus says His words “*are Spirit and they are life (life-giving).*” We can help ourselves and others by being immersed in the Scriptures and listening to His voice.

QUESTIONS

How are you experiencing the abundant life Jesus came to bring us?
How can you experience it even more abundantly (John 10:10)?
How can your Christian life be more balanced?

PRAYERS

For Shepherd's Pantry

Shepherd's Pantry could not fulfill its mission of helping the neighbors in need without the help of volunteers. We are extremely appreciative of their support and generosity. Pray that all of the volunteers have great health and enduring strength.

FRIDAY

Read **Matthew 6:9, 16:18-19, 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 12:13-27; Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:15-16**

Parts of the Same Body

What's in a name? Jesus taught us to pray these words: “*Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name*” (Matthew 6:9). May our Father God's reputation and honor be upheld and protected.

Jesus commissioned His disciples to make more disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). According to Darrell W. Johnson in his book, *Experiencing the Trinity*, “When we say ‘yes’ to Jesus as Savior and Lord, we are immersed into the love and life of God the Father; and we are immersed into the grace and truth of God the Son; and we are immersed into the power and purity of God the Spirit. Most of us are not yet experiencing and appropriating all that was given to us at conversion.”

In much of the world, there is great cost with being identified with Jesus and His Church in baptism; but it is worth the cost, because acceptance in the community of faith is necessary to the health of the Body of Christ, individually and corporately.

The Father Glorified tells the story of a Muslim cleric having a dream of Isa (Jesus) and the Injil (Bible), which led him to a nearby church, where

he received a frosty reception due to his beard and robe. There was fear among the church members, but the pastor recognized a genuine seeker. Over time the former cleric formed a group of like-minded disillusioned clerics, some of whom decided to participate in a secret baptism to show their seriousness in identifying themselves as disciples of Jesus and members of His Church.

Rolland Rolheiser in *The Holy Longing* says church is also like a proving ground. How can we say we love a perfect God we cannot see, when we cannot love our imperfect brothers and sisters whom we can see (1 John 4:19-21)?

QUESTIONS

What do you contribute to the Body of Christ (your church)?
What does your church do for you?

PRAYERS

For Shepherd's Pantry

Shepherd's Pantry has been providing personalized case management to clients, along with financial support, through the Shepherd's Help Fund and Faith & Finances classes. Pray for ongoing support to grow this Shepherd's Help Fund to be able to keep up with the needs of the neighbors and support the community in new personalized ways.

Sources

- Darrell W. Johnson, *Experiencing the Trinity* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2002).
- David Watson and Patrick Robertson, *The Father Glorified: True Stories of God's Power Through Ordinary People* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2013).
- Michael Green, *Baptism: Its Purpose, Practice and Power* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010).
- Roland Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday Publishing, 1999).

