

Matthew 3:1-12

“Prepare the Way”

December 4, 2016

Last week Christ entered into Jerusalem as a King. Of course the people were looking for a King to overthrow the hated Roman rule. However, God does not come to us and meet our needs. God comes to us to fulfill His plans. God's plan was to send us a Savior for our sins not a King to rule our bodies. For just as King David died and his kingdom fell apart, so also any physical kingdoms will die and their kingdoms will fall apart. In contrast, God's kingdom established through Christ's sacrifice on the Cross at Calvary will last forever.

Last week we saw our King coming in peace riding on a colt the foal of a donkey. This fulfilled one of the three hundred Old Testament prophecies that God gave to us so that we would be able to spot the coming Savior/King. This week we see another Old Testament prophesy fulfilled to prepare us to greet our coming Savior/King. This prophesy was that one like Elijah would come preaching repentance so that our souls would be prepared to receive our Savior/King.

This is Advent. This is the time to prepare our souls to receive our Savior/King whose birth we celebrate on Christmas. We prepare our souls by repenting of our sins. Sin is any thought, desire, word or deed that is done without Christ being the center and focus of our lives. Sin is the failure to think, desire, say,

or do anything because Christ is not at the center of our lives. They call them the Sins of Commission and the Sins of Omission. Often days, weeks, or even years later we are reminded of something we said or did that make us wish we could take it back. We can't. We can only be sorry and confess it before our God. With Christ at the center of our lives, we will find His forgiveness.

In our text, the Pharisees and Sadducees were warned to produce the fruit of repentance. They were coming to John the Baptist to be baptized like the rest of the people. The Pharisees and Sadducees were the Church Officials of Jesus time. They represented God but they had drifted so far from God that they would lose their souls in God's condemnation. In Luther's time we see the same need to reform the church officials. We Christians can face the same condemnation from our God today when we don't keep Christ at the center and focus. Just because we carry the name Lutheran or Christian does not mean we are saved. We have to produce the fruit of repentance. As James 2:26 says, "faith without works is dead."

Jesus described our faith walk as; "Taking up our Cross and following Him." Therefore our faith walk is a walk of sacrifice. This walk of sacrifice is not only doing things in and around the church. Churches die when the focus is upon meeting their own needs. The walk of sacrifice is reaching out into our homes, our community, our nation and our world with the love of Christ. This walk of sacrifice is caring for the forgotten and the neglected of our world with the love of

Christ as we see that the hungry and homeless are fed and cared for. This walk of sacrifice is forgiving again and again the wrongs done to us.

When we take the walk of sacrifice for Christ, we will find that we are blessed. When we forgive the hurt and pain others inflict upon us and turn it over to our God, we find that we will have peaceful hearts not bitter hearts and revengeful hearts. When we help others in their need, we will find that feeling of satisfaction of doing something good. When we thank and praise our God for His many blessings, we will find that we have the spiritual strength to stay on the path that leads to eternity. When we are lonely in our world, we can fall back upon the love that God has for us in Christ. He makes us feel that we are part of a community that lasts for eternity. Of course these blessings are not the reason for repenting and recommitting ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. These blessing are the fruit of the faith that He has called us to. Amen.