

Dec . 22, 2024 Sermon

PREPARE!

Old Testament Isa.40:3-5 (NRSV)

A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low:
The uneven ground shall become level,
And the rough places a plain.
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
And all people shall see it together,
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

New Testament Mark 1: 2-3

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,””

I would surmise that you. Yes, each and every one of you, is struggling to prepare for the 25th. I could up your stress a little by saying it's only a couple of days away. You either make it or you fall short in a heap of tape, wrapping paper, confectioner sugar, light strands, candles, and shelf sitting elves etc. you get the POINT!

The cooks amongst the congregation know that the goods just don't appear on the table. That you have to proceed a strict order of preparation to see the family smile.

Farmers/gardeners will tell you great crop yield comes only with great soil preparation. The right of amount of compost, organics, drainage, in our area winter cover crop.

How much more has God prepared for the coming of His Son? Nothing was left to chance.

The prophet Isaiah gives God's future plans - hundreds of years before they come to fruition. The details are more exhausting than expectant parents packing the suitcase to take to the delivery room.

The Gospel of Matthew shares Jesus' genealogy all the way back to Abraham showing how God's finger active through history to fulfill (prepare) for the birth of His Son. Over 320 details of prophecy were fulfilled in the birth and life and death of Jesus. So many so that the odds of all of them being accomplished in one man- almost mathematically impossible.

Why all this preparation? God's plan for you. That's right all this to show that God proposed a plan of redemption. Women would bear a son that would crush the head of the serpent.

God then provides an earthly father, Joseph, This earthly father has the ability to provide for his family whether they are in Bethlehem or Egypt.

Even John the Baptist was not your run-of-the-mill locust-eating prophet. He was the son of Elizabeth and Zacharias. A priestly couple, who happened to be the uncle and aunt of Jesus. Elizabeth, an ancient mother to be in seclusion for the first five months of her pregnancy receives Mary to help with the last trimester, and lo and behold Mary is pregnant with the Son of God. May is there learn of the blessings of God.

Then John is the one who calls all to prepare the way of the Lord. More about his message in a moment.

God even uses the leader of Syria to call for a census so Joseph has to take his pregnant wife to his hometown of Bethlehem, the House of David.

So in this great God's plan there are two things we must do to fulfill all that He has for us.

1. First we are to be water baptized as John the Baptist did following our repentance of our sins.
2. John says that to follow (Jesus) we need water baptism sign of our repentance and then the Holy Spirit enters us - We bear fruit, enabled by the fruits of the Spirit and the Gifts of the Spirit.

Every believer has at least one gift of the Spirit, and all the fruits of the Spirit. Listed in Gal 5:22-23.

The Gifts of the Spirit list Romans 12:6-8, 1Cor. 12:4-11, and 1 Cor 12:28 there are 16!

If you have not entered into either of these you are incomplete in your preparedness to serve God as He desires you too.

Lets complete our preparations to be the spiritual servants God wants us to be.