

DO YOUR JOB!

Matthew 3:1-12 Text vs. 8 *“Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.”*

Have you ever felt bad about something you said, or did, and didn't know quite what to do about it? And just saying “I'm sorry” didn't quite do it. You needed something more! Well, in our lesson this morning, John the Baptist's call to repentance was clearly related that. He said it was having a change of mind and making a change the direction of life, because *“when He saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where He was baptizing, He said to them: ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.’”* (Mt. 3:7-8) The Greek word for *repentance* means you should think differently about the way you look at sin in your life. In Jesus' time, religious leaders taught sin was something outside of yourself, like lying, stealing, or cheating. But Jesus said, sin is in your heart. And then it begins to creep into the way you live, and it becomes obvious you are living a life without God.

Oswald Chambers, an early-twentieth-century Scottish Baptist evangelist and teacher best known for his daily devotional *My Utmost for His Highest* said, *“It's not repentance that saves me. Repentance is when I realize what God has done in Christ Jesus.”* You see, the danger is when you understand the result of your sin, but instead of recognizing that's what's causing you to sin, you keep on doing *what* you're doing, but don't know *why* you're doing it! You don't know what's causing you to sin! Well, the reason is you're not right with God! And if you're not right with God, then why aren't you? When you turn to Jesus and believe what He can do for you, the wonderful Atonement of Jesus Christ will instantly put you into a right relationship with God. It's the miracle of God's grace that will let you stand justified before God. And it's not because of anything you've done. It's what Jesus has done for you by His sacrificial death on the Cross. It's how sinful people are changed into new creatures.

However, when you profess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior *without* changing your life, it must be questioned. Thinking you can be saved *without* a clean break from the sin in your life is an insult to God. It's like the man who went to the doctor and said, “Doc, every time I drink iced tea, I get a severe pain in my right eye. What should I do about it?” The doctor looked at him and said . . . “Well, take the spoon out of the glass!” In other words, change the way you're doing things!

Let me tell you about a man who got lost in the desert. He wandered around a long time. His throat became dry. He saw a little shack in the distance and went over to it. Inside, he found a water pump. Beside it was a small jug of water with a note attached which read: “Pour *all* the water into the top of the pump. That will prime it. If you do this, you will get all the water you need”. He thought about that! If he trusted the note and poured all the water into the pump, and it worked, he would have all the water he needed. But, if it didn't work, he would still be thirsty and might die. Or he could choose to drink all the water in the jug and get rid of his thirst! But then, he still might die. Well, he had to make a choice. So, after thinking about it, he decided to take a chance. He poured the entire jug of water into the pump and began to work the pump handle up and down, up, and down! Nothing happened! He got a little scared but kept on going until the water started coming out of the pump. In fact, so much water came out he drank all he wanted. He even took a shower with it. Then, he filled all the containers he could find laying around in the shack. Why? Because he was willing to give up his immediate need of water and it got him all the water he needed! The note went on. “After you have finished, please refill the jug for the next traveler.” He refilled the jug, and then he added this to the note: “Please prime the pump. Believe me, it works”!

And you know what? You must make the same choice in your life. Are you holding on to what you already have because you don't believe there are better things in store for you? You've settled for immediate satisfaction! Or do you trust God enough that He will give you what He has promised? Well, the choice is obvious. You need to *pour all the water in*. Trust God with everything! And once you've experienced God's *living water*, you'll need to tell other people about it. John 4:14 says, *“Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*

Water, and the nourishment and refreshment it brings, is a theme that runs from the beginning to the end of the Bible. Here, Jesus offers spiritual water. To believe in Him, and be filled with His Holy Spirit, is to be cleansed of your sins and washed clean by His blood. Then the spiritual water that flows from you will be a source of spiritual healing and refreshment to all to whom you minister to in Jesus' name. You can never be truly spiritually thirsty after drinking this water and having received the gift of eternal life in Christ and peace with God. Remember what the man said? “Go ahead. Prime the pump. Believe me, it works”!

God wants you to be a “*pump primer!*” He wants you to tell others about Him! And for decades, the church has been crying “*more water.*” Bring a revival! Everyone would like to see God moving in a great way here in Everglades Community Church, because if it happened, it would affect our whole town. But you need to understand this! God is already pouring out His blessings responding to the needs of our community through donated food from several charities and money

given to our weekly Food Distribution. That supports over 120 families in our community. Funds donated for our mission work help other churches and families here in our community. Help for our After School Program in Baja, Mexico, and our troops. The Abused Women and Children of Collier County. Our Christmas Shoebox Ministry. And much more! Yes, we're filling the "water pump". And the pump is working!

It began 2000 years ago when Jesus came. And for the first 300 years, the Gospel had an impact on the whole world. It was believed that in 200 years the whole world would become Christian. But when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, church growth slowed. The church became comfortable with its peace after years of opposition and persecution. Then, at the turn of the twentieth century a great revival stirred the church. But it brought opposition and persecution! Then, the church began to experience growth again, because when opposition to the church arises, God moves among His people. But now, the church has settled once again into its comfort zone. England is no longer a Christian nation. Atheism and Islam have made major gains there with less than half the people in England and Wales being Christian. Christianity in the U.S. is quickly shrinking to the point it may no longer be the majority religion. It has been shrinking for decades. A Pew Research Center study in 2020 showed about 64% of Americans identify as Christian. But fifty years ago, that number was 90%.

And until we begin to be what God has called us to be, "*water pump fillers*," we will be like those John the Baptist was accusing on that day when he said, "*Do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for 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.*" John was saying repentance is the key in preparing the way for the kingdom of heaven. Martin Luther said, "*All of a Christian's life is one of repentance.*" And when you don't repent, it offends God. Repentance is for everyone's own good. So, don't think of sin as being *okay*, whether it's a little bit here, or a little bit there. It's still wrong! It's dishonest for you to think you can just go on sinning because Jesus paid it all, and you're covered by His "*grace*".

When you don't *repent*, you know what? You're worshipping yourself! You're proclaiming to know Christ, yet you're living in such a way that you continue in sin. So, not only are you lying to others about what the Bible says, you're lying to yourself! And by your example you're leading people down a long, dangerous path. What you're doing is slapping God in the face! You're saying, "*thanks God for the forgiveness. But I'll take it from here*". God won't tolerate that! When you sincerely repent of your sin, you worship God. You say publicly what Christ has done for you on the cross. You believe in His Word. You confess sin's just not worth it! That's when you grow in your walk with the Lord. It's in those moments you're living as a "*new creation*". The old version of you has passed away. You're trusting God that what He says is true. He knows better than you!

So, keep on being a "*water pourer*!" Repent of sin in your life. Love others through your repentance. So, do your job! Pour the water of repentance out for others to drink to their fulfillment. Then you will be like that man in the desert who added to the note, "After you have finished, please refill the jug for the next traveler. Believe me, it works"! AMEN