

Difference Maker

The Gospel According to Luke, Message #2, Luke 3:1-20

INTRODUCTION

What if I told you that our generation's most prominent person or people would not be a politician, entertainer, athlete, business owner, or scholar?

The people the world often looks to as prominent are not those God records as prominent. Notice how this quickly becomes apparent in Luke 3.

BIBLE

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.”

Luke 3:1-2 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.3.1-2.KJV>

INTRODUCTION

When you begin reading Luke 3, you wonder where Luke is heading as he names the prominent figures of the day. The Roman emperor, the four regional rulers of the area where the Jews mainly lived, and the high priests of the Jews are identified in the opening of the chapter. Yet, they are not the focus. Two primary reasons for this appear.

First, God wants to remind us that the tenor of the times does not impact what He can do. All of these leaders were corrupt. The political leaders were cruel tyrants who did anything to get what they wanted. The religious leaders were power-hungry hypocrites more interested in appeasing world leaders than serving the Lord. None of them stopped or threatened what God did!

APPLICATION

The tenor of our times reveals similarities to that time. We have corrupt leaders who will do anything to get what they want, and we have religious leaders more interested in what they can get than what they can give. However, our times do not stop or threaten

what God is doing and wants to do. If you find yourself fearful of the times, stop focusing on the times and focus on the One Who exists outside time and rules over it.

INTRODUCTION

Second, we are drawn to recognize that God often works through unexpected means. The authorities or recognized leaders may be the ones you would naturally choose as the most prominent, influential people and the ones that God would choose to use. However, God chose unexpected means to do His work. He chose John and, by His choice and enabling, John became a difference maker.

Luke 3:1-20 provides a concise record of John Baptist's life. Through it, we'll discover applications and challenges for our lives in four scenes that will encourage us to be difference-makers.

Let's begin by reading Luke 3:1-6.

BIBLE

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, Make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, And every mountain and hill shall be brought low; And the crooked shall be made straight, And the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

Luke 3:1-6 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.3.1-6.KJV>

INTRODUCTION

What aspects of John Baptist's life provide lessons for me to apply to mine?

1. APPLY SOMETHING OF PURPOSE

EXPLANATION

John the Baptist's life and ministry were prophesied and prepared by God. The word of God came to him, not to the prominent individuals previously mentioned.

For 400+ years, there had not been a prophet to share God's word in Israel. God did not choose the Emperor, the governor, the kings, or even the high priests to be the bearer of His word and the messenger to prepare the way for the Messiah. He chose John. Even for his day, he was odd. He lived in the wilderness, wore camel skins, and ate locusts dipped in honey. He proved what Paul would later pen in 1 Corinthians 1.

BIBLE

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/1co.1.27-29.KJV>

APPLICATION

The person who thinks or says, “I do not know how God would use me or why God would use me. I'm awkward, I'm unskilled, I'm whatever”, you're exactly the person God wants to use. You can be a difference maker.

Your life may not have been prophesied like John the Baptist's was, but your life has no less purpose than his. God knew you before you were conceived. He saw you before you were born. He designed you with purpose.

2. APPLY SOMETHING OF POWER

EXPLANATION

Follow along as I continue reading verses 7-14.

BIBLE

“Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that

hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.”

Luke 3:7-14 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.3.7-14.KJV>

EXPLANATION

We must be careful about taking John’s message and using it today. John’s message was a pre-messianic message for the people of Israel, especially Israel’s religious leaders.

John Baptist called these people to repentance. His preaching lines up with the prophets of the Old Testament, who called the people to covenant faithfulness and law obedience.

Was he preparing the people for a King or Savior?

If I look at his message as the Gospel’s message of salvation, I have to reconcile repentance and baptism as necessary for the remission of sins the way he preached it. His message was strictly for the Jews in preparation for the King and His kingdom. He demanded repentance and life change to be ready to receive the Messiah. The Gospel declares that repentance is part of receiving the Messiah, and life change is evidence of receiving Him.

However, there are applications we can take from his message.

First, the fruit of salvation is a changing life (vv. 8-9).

Second, generosity, justice, and mercy are prime characteristics of a changing life (vv. 10-15).

APPLICATION

The application that comes from this section is power. Where did John’s power come from? What produces the capacity for a transformed life? The power was not in John himself. The power was not in the people themselves. The power is in God’s word and Spirit through the word. Do not focus on the man, and do not focus on the method. Focus on the message and, better yet, where the message came from.

3. APPLY SOMETHING OF PERSPECTIVE

BIBLE

“And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.”

Luke 3:15-18 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.3.15-18.KJV>

ILLUSTRATION

J. C. Ryle prodded a group of preachers in the middle of the 19th century with these words:

“In conclusion, I will remind you of the words the Apostle addressed to the Ephesian elders: ‘I commend you to God and to the word of His grace.’ (Acts 20:32 (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2020.32>))

We are about to part, perhaps to meet no more in this world. Let us solemnly commend one another to God, and to the word of His grace, as that which will never err, never fail us, never lead us astray.

Guided by that Word as our light and lamp, we shall at last receive an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

Above all, let us never forget the advice which Whitefield gave in one of his letters: let us ‘make much of our Lord Jesus Christ.’

There are many things of which we may easily make too much in our ministry, give them too much attention, think about them too much.

But we can never make too much of Christ” (<https://tollelege.net/2017/07/15/make-much-of-our-lord-jesus-christ-by-j-c-ryle/>).

EXPLANATION

John had the opportunity to turn everything and everyone to himself. He did the exact opposite. Did you see that he said he was not even worthy of unbuckling Jesus's sandals for Him? Unbuckling a man's sandals was a job reserved for the humblest house servant or enslaved person. While everyone was praising and building him up, John the Baptist saw himself as unworthy to do the task of a humble servant.

APPLICATION

What's your perspective in this life, in this church, in daily living? Let's not be guilty of making so much of everything else and everyone else. Let's make much of Jesus!

4. APPLY SOMETHING OF PAIN

BIBLE

“But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.”

Luke 3:19-20 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.3.19-20.KJV>

EXPLANATION

John the Baptist was not deterred from doing God's work and preaching His word, even if it meant angering the cruel, corrupt king. Doing so landed him in prison and eventually cost him his life.

APPLICATION

Doing right does not cushion you from pain. It may do the opposite. However, pain should not deter us from making a difference for Jesus.

CONCLUSION

The people the world often looks to as prominent are not those God records as prominent.

If you are still determining whether or not this is true, consider a biblical illustration that foreshadowed a biblical principle that supports this statement.

First, notice what Jesus said about Mary, who anointed Him and then dried His feet with her hair. The Bible records this in Mark 14:6-9.

BIBLE

“And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.”

Mark 14:6-9 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/mrk.14.6-9.KJV>

CONCLUSION

Though others considered her behavior inappropriate, calling it a waste, Jesus commended it and Mary. Throughout the rest of eternity, her action would be preached and remembered.

Mary's action and, more specifically, Jesus's recognition of her action illustrate the truth of the biblical principle recorded in Hebrews 6:10.

BIBLE

“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

Hebrews 6:10 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/heb.6.10.KJV>

CONCLUSION

God neither forgets His people, their work, or their labor of love, primarily evidenced through their ministry to each other. Consider the lessons from John the Baptist's life, and commit to being a difference maker.