

Group Notes 28 November 2010

Repent

Welcome - Ice Breaker

Each group member take 2 pieces of paper and write on one when you start packing to go on holiday, and on the other when you start your Christmas shopping. Take it in turns to try and guess when each group member starts – any surprises??

Word - Sermon Summary: Read Matthew 3:1-17

This sermon for today was going to be a challenging one to prepare, deliver and to hear. Hearing about repentance is never easy or pleasant.

Gospel reading is all about preparation, the whole chapter is about preparation for the coming of the kingdom. It splits into three, John the Baptist appears, John the Baptist (JTB) prophecies of the impact of the coming one, the appearance of Jesus Messiah for baptism by JTB.

JTB appears to prepare the way, JTB prophecies of the impact of the kingdom and what we must do to prepare ourselves, and Jesus is baptised preparing for the start of his earthly ministry. The aim is to concentrate today on what we're told to do by JTB to prepare ourselves. Any talk starts with 'repentance' in title or subject is not going to be a barrel of laughs, potentially hard going. It calls to mind sandwich board men – repent the end of the world is nigh, turn or burn.

Repentance, the word has potential to be unpleasant, what has this to do with Advent? Advent – heralding start of the Christmas season, start of celebration, exchanging presents etc etc. I'd like to suggest its something different, not just celebration of Jesus coming as a new baby that first Christmas.

Advent is also about preparing for Jesus' second coming. It is the time when we will experience Jesus completing his work. It is important to remember that Jesus will come again. And when he comes again he comes to judge the living and the dead as the Nicene Creed says. Now something for us to think about; we'll be saying those words in a moment. Are we living with this in mind? Are we living your life with the fact that Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead?

So what is repentance? Repentance requires first to listen to God. And how do we listen, by reading bibles and spending time in prayer with God.

Secondly to act on what we hear. Not acting on what we hear, is not what God has planned for us. When God speaks he expects us to listen and to act, not to do so needs repentance.

Thirdly identifying problems are important. Running away from them or hiding them is dangerous and unhealthy for our future. Because sin is always an obstacle in our relationship with others and God. And if we have an obstacle with someone else, then there is an obstacle between us and God.

Is it all hard work? Not at all we have Jesus there is some Good News. Repentance with Jesus does not just stop with seeing where there are problems in your life. When John the Baptist came all he could do was say, Hey get ready, repent!! He could do nothing more than encouraging people to acknowledge their sin. However he pointed us to someone who could do something miraculous with our repentance. He pointed us to Jesus. Repentance with Jesus involves handing these issues and problems over to Jesus. Allowing Jesus to deal with them. Listen to what John says will happen when Jesus comes verses 11 & 12. In other words Jesus will do the purifying. Jesus will deal with the sin in your life. And he does this in two ways. One is forgiveness. He will remove the problem sin brings to your relationship with God. Secondly

Jesus is there to help you deal right now with that sin and how it affects your relationship with others and God. Repentance isn't just about saying sorry, its about changing too, doing something different.

Perhaps we could take a leaf out of all the books that are urging us to prepare for Christmas as if it were going to be the last Christmas ever, and start to prepare during advent for Christmas as it we fully expect Jesus to return to us this Christmas. Challenge you and me, to spend the advent weeks looking at areas of our life that need to change, things we need to repent of, and to change once and for all. Just in case

Word 2 - Discussion Questions:-

- Why do you think we find 'repentance' such a painful and challenging process/
- How important is repentance to your well being? What happens when you hold back from doing these things, how do you feel?
- What is your response to the premise of repentance as being part of Advent?

Worship Ideas

Read the gospel out loud, perhaps each person taking a line at a time. Spend a few moments reflecting on Repentance. If appropriate share these reflections but if not end with silence.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, you call us to prepare for the coming of your Son; forgive us our unreadiness to receive him. Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus you were proclaimed by John the Baptist; help us also to prepare your way, Christ have mercy

Holy Spirit you speak through the prophets make us attentive to hear your

Works / Witness

We have some great things going forward in our ministry to families and children at present. God is really blessing Liz Burley's new ministry and moving it forward!

- Panto – Cinderella – on Friday 3 December in church, a great opportunity to promote our Christmas services and activities.

Please consider what support you could give.