

**Luke 3:1-20 – Produce the fruit of repentance**

Clint Le Page

Main Point – If you've repented and Jesus is your Saviour &amp; Lord, show it.

When was the last time you really changed your mind on something?(**SLIDE**)-----  
 Something big. Like you switched the footy team you barrack for.-----

My father-in-law still keeps trying to lure my eldest, Josiah, from the disappointing Bombers, to Collingwood.

I'm glad that thus far Josiah's holding strong, and hasn't changed his mind.-----  
 Maybe you've changed your mind on the course or job you'll go for, the car you'll buy, the big item you'll save up for; or now you love spicy food.-----

What was the last thing you really changed your mind on, making a big decision?-----  
 Maybe for you it was, when you decided to wholeheartedly follow Jesus, or openly tell others about that, at uni, work, or up front at church.-----

This change of mind and direction, is repentance,(**SLIDE**) and today we're thinking about repentance when it comes to the Lord.-----

And it's so easy for us to say, "Yeh, I've repented". "I turned to Jesus and he saved me 2 years ago/ 20 years ago/ 50 years ago".

The challenge that remains is, are we showing that we've repented by our lives.

Our choices have consequences. And some are deadly serious.-----

So I hope you'll listen up carefully to God's word today.-----

We're in this series on Luke's Gospel.(**SLIDE**)

Luke has already told us about the miraculous births of John the Baptist and Jesus.

Last week we heard about Jesus' wise words and actions as a 12 yo – the only incident in Scripture that speaks of him between infancy and 30 yo.(3.23).

Now in ch3 Luke has fast forwarded about 18 years.

And what Luke writes next he clearly **sets in history**, actual history.(**SLIDE**)

Luke wants to ground what John the Baptist and Jesus do, in time and space.

What we read is not myth or fantasy.

And **v1-2** give these geo-political markers.

And Luke implies that this movement that starts in the wilderness, will change the course of world history – as Christianity has.-----

There is uncertainty as to when Tiberius Caesar's 15<sup>th</sup> year was, but it's about 28-29AD.

And a few of the names mentioned will become important at the end of Jesus' life – Pilate and Herod, and the high priests, Annas and Caiaphas.

These are all rich and powerful. The movers and shakers of Jesus' day.

But notice that the Word of God through John the Baptist, does not come primarily to them, but to everyday people, out in the wilderness.

**Which brings us to my first point, Prepare for the Lord.(SLIDE)**

John's father Zechariah had prophesied about him in ch1 **v76(SLIDE)** - that John will be a prophet, and prepare people for the Lord, and help people know how to be saved.

Then **v80** said that when John grew up he lived in the wilderness, until the time he went public.

Well, now is the moment.

And **3v3** says John the Baptist starts proclaiming in the wilderness(**SLIDE**), 'a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.'

As I said at the start, repentance means a change of mind, a total change of mind and direction.

It's doing a **U-Turn(SLIDE)** in your heart, mind and life.

And John is preaching that if you want to be forgiven by God, you need to repent.

You need to turn away from sin and disobedience, and turn back to God.-----  
 And water baptism was a sign of this repentance and forgiveness.  
 Before John, it would only be Gentile non-Jews who'd get baptized, when they converted to Judaism and decided to follow the God of Israel.  
 Now John is saying, all you Jews, you're all out of relationship with God, you're all unacceptable to God, because of your sin. So you need to repent too.

You need to repent if you want to be forgiven, and saved.

For God will no longer hold your sins against you.-----  
 God will take your sins and their punishment away from you, as far as the east is from the west; as far as the sunrise is from the sunset (**Ps 103.12-SLIDE**).  
 And John says, if you repent, I'll baptise you.-----

Then Luke tells us in **vv4-6** that in this, John was fulfilling the words of **Isaiah 40**.  
 700 hundred years earlier Isaiah the prophet said that someone will call out in the wilderness.

Which John is now doing, as God speaks through him.-----

When you see a famous musician or band, you have a warm-up act.

John is a bit like the warm-up act for Jesus.

But really it's way more than that.

For John isn't just introducing the main keynote speaker.

Nor is he just getting people excited about the big star.----

John prepares people for the LORD.(**SLIDE**)-----

**Isa 40v3** originally said that the voice prepared the way for the capitals-L-O-R-D God to come.

So Luke 3 is implying that the Lord Jesus is God.----- This is BIG!-----

And the paths are made straight, the valleys lifted, hills flattened, crooked straightened, to prepare people for the coming of the Lord, and salvation.

It's not talking about transforming the land, they are metaphors for people's hearts and lives. They are metaphors of repentance.

And all of this preparation happens by John calling people to acknowledge and confess their sins, and turn from them in repentance.[Mt 3.6]

For when you know you've sinned, and you need forgiveness, it means you're ready and waiting for a Saviour.

John prepares people for God's coming in Jesus; he prepares them to encounter Christ.

He does this by helping them to see how bad they are; how much they deserve judgement. How much they need a Saviour.-----

Is that true of you?-----

Without Jesus and his salvation, and God's transforming grace, do you know how sinful you are, how much you deserve judgement, and how much you desperately need a Saviour?-----

We all do.-----

And maybe when you talk with your friends about Jesus, instead of jumping to the good news, you need to share the bad news first, and of our need for him.-----

And maybe when your friend struggles, sins, or senses their regret, or longing – that's the God-given opportunity?-----

**Next point is, Produce the fruit of repentance.(SLIDE)**

In **v7-14**, we see how the people respond to John the Baptist, and he to them.-----

Crowds come to him to be baptized.

And he calls them, 'Brood (or offspring) of vipers'.(**SLIDE**)-----

Interestingly, in Matthew 3v7 that language is targeted to the Pharisees & Sadducees.

But here John's also saying all the people were poisonous snakes; and 'Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?'

Sounds pretty full-on, pretty harsh doesn't it?

Some people think a preacher should be nice and never offend, but John's not like that is he?

Maybe you'd react against fire and brimstone preaching, and to my sermon today?----  
But maybe we need to worry more about the judgement of God than the politeness of the preacher.-----

John is saying you are sinners who need to repent before God's wrath comes on you. And I am saying, you are sinners who need to repent before God's wrath comes on you.----- As do I.

And if you are offended by that, please understand, that God is more offended by your sin.

God is offended by people who ignore him, reject him, and either, live as if he doesn't exist, or try to get to God on their own terms.-----

Religious people, secular people, agnostics and atheists; criminals and nice people have all offended and wronged God, and His wrath is coming.

It's meant to be confronting.-----

And the Jews could not say, 'We are descendants of Abraham.', **v8**.

As if being of Jewish descent saves you.-----

And we cannot say, God wont judge me, cos I grew up in a Christian family.

Or I've been to church all my life, I'm a member of this church.

Or I prayed a prayer x years ago.

I've pray and read my bible every day.

I know all the right theology

See how it's all, I, I, I. Me, me, me.-----

But actually, the axe of God's judgement, was in **v9**, and still is today,**(SLIDE)** at the root of the trees – ready to cut down every tree that does not produce good fruit.

I take no pleasure in saying this, but, every person that does not produce good fruit will be cut down, on the day of judgement.

Not because we're saved by our good works.

But because we must, **v8**, produce fruit consistent with repentance.

Show that we have repented by our actions and changed lives.-----

Faith always leads to fruit.-----

So repentance is more than words, more than "I'm sorry God for all my sins".

Just like an **abuser** who hurts and controls his wife - He'll say, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry", 'Please forgive me". Or, "I'll make it up to you", I'll change".

But then he does it again, and again.----- And things don't change.

That is not repentance.-----**(SLIDE)**

Repentance is a change of mind, change of heart, and change of direction.

It's not to say you'll never sin again, but repentance will still show itself in real change.

It's true in our human relationships, and it's true when it comes to our relationship with God.

Real repentance will show itself in fruit.-----

For if there's no fruit then God's word says, the repentance isn't real; isn't genuine.-----

So I ask, you Christian, is your repentance real?-----

Have you, in that big decision, whole of life way, repented and turned God for mercy?---

If your repentance was real, it will show itself in changed behaviour.**(SLIDE)**

And that's exactly what we see next in the passage.

The crowds ask the prophet John, '**What then should we do?**'

And **v11**, John replies, when it comes to your clothes and food – share!  
 If you have more and another has less, be generous and willing to share.  
 God has been generous to us so that we can be generous to others.

Have you remembered that?-----

Then John says to the tax-collectors, don't collect more money than you should.  
 Be honest and not greedy.-----

He says to the soldiers, don't take money from people by force, bullying, or falsely accusing.

And be satisfied with your wages.

Be content with your salary.(Phil 4.11f)-----

In all these examples the theme of the danger of wealth & possessions is highlighted.

And it's a theme in Luke's Gospel too.-----

Most of us are very well-off by the world's standards.

So if you're going to produce the fruit of repentance in the area of money, what should you do?-----

Do you need to repent of greed, and give more generously?-----

Or Share what you have more with others?-----

Or be content with your wages and not always seek more?-----

For you though, maybe it's not about money.

So what sins are you drawn to, that you need to turn from, and do differently?-----

Please ask yourself, what should I do to honour Jesus?-----

What should I do to honour Jesus and show he is Lord of my life?-----

Maybe it should start with confession. And crying out for God's grace and Spirit to change you.-----

Then a planned commitment to make practical changes.-----

The entire life of a follower of Jesus, is to be one of repentance.-----

Repenting of specific sins and showing the fruit and evidence of that.-----

Yet, we can only do this by God's Spirit because the Saviour has come.

And that's where we head in our **third point, The Powerful Saviour.(SLIDE)----**

In **v15** the people start wondering if John might be the Messiah, the Christ.

But he clearly points people to Jesus, the Messiah.----

'One more powerful than I am is coming'.

Who is so great, so powerful, so holy, that the prophet John is not worthy to untie his sandals.**(SLIDE)**

To take the sandals off and wash a person's feet was the lowest servant or slave's job.

And John the Baptist is saying, I'm not even worthy to be Jesus' slave; too unworthy to serve him or touch him.

And if John's not worthy to do that, then how unworthy am I?-----

John points people to Jesus, John exalts Jesus; and his worth, his greatness.

And don't you want to do that too?-----

John says, he baptizes with water, but the Messiah will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.-----

Now this is a much-debated phrase, especially what the 'fire' refers to.-----

In **Acts 2.33(SLIDE)** the apostle Peter says it was Jesus, who died, rose and ascended to heaven, who poured out the Holy Spirit on people.

And Eph 1 says all who believe the Gospel have the Spirit.(Eph 1.13)

And indeed we cannot live lives of repentance and obedience-from-the-heart without the Spirit.(Rom 8.13; **Ezek 36.27-SLIDE)**-----

But now through Christ's power and Spirit we can.-----

But thinking about the 'fire' John referred to that the Messiah would bring; yes, at Pentecost, the Spirit came down with tongues of fire (Acts 2.3).-----  
 Or the fire could refer to the fire in relationships, the divisions following Jesus will bring for some families (**SLIDE-Lk12.49-51**).-----  
 But Lk **3 v17** speaks of the Messiah clearing the threshing floor,(**SLIDE**) gathering the wheat and burning the chaff.

So the fire most likely speaks of the final judgement, which Christ will bring when he returns.

When the devil is thrown into the lake of fire, **Rev 20.10.(SLIDE)**  
 And when everyone whose name is not in the Lamb's Book of Life, everyone who has not truly repented and trusted in the Lord, will be thrown into the lake of fire.

The second death (**Rev 20.14-15-SLIDE**).-----  
 And that is scary.

And it is real.-----

When Jesus returns, the wrath and judgement of God will be experienced by all who have not repented, turned back to God and trusted in God's Saviour.-----

All unbelieving and unrepentant people will be cast into the lake of fire.

So I urge you, if you've not repented, Do that today.

Don't wait any longer.-----

Repent and believe the Gospel.-----

For the Lord Jesus is the Saviour who is powerful to save.-----

**V18** says John proclaimed the good news to the people.(**SLIDE**)

That was a message of judgement and mercy.

And it's such good news, for while judgement is coming, salvation from it and forgiveness is promised, to all who repent.

And from the beginning of Jesus' public ministry onwards, that repentance means turning away from sin and back to God, by trusting in Jesus.

By turning to him as Lord, the Lord who saves.-----

John said wrath is coming.

Well, the wrath of God is absorbed by Christ on the cross in our place.

So all who turn from sin, to him as Saviour and have him as Lord, will be forgiven.---

The forgiveness John spoke of, was won and obtained through the cross of Christ.----

As John says in **John 1.29(SLIDE)** – Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of world.-----

Jesus by his death and resurrection is powerful to save.-----

John pointed people to Jesus, as the Powerful Saviour and Lord.

All faithful Gospel preaching will point to Jesus, as Saviour and Lord.

And we respond and are saved by repenting.-----

We see at the end of our passage that Herod, King **Herod does not repent**.-----

Herod talked his brother into divorcing his wife Herodias, so he could marry her.

And John rebukes Herod for this sin and his other evil deeds.

John called Herod to repent, and he would not.

And John got imprisoned for it.-----

See how John faithfully proclaims the same Gospel to the crowds, and the rich & powerful, even when it's costly.

And brothers and sisters, maybe the Lord wants you to do that?-----

Call someone else to stop rejecting God, turn to Jesus, and be saved from judgement.  
 Is there someone who needs to hear this message from you?-----

Or are you the person who needs to learn from Herod's bad example.

Herod would not, but do you need to repent, wholeheartedly turn to God for the first time, as you ask Jesus to save you and be your Lord?-----

Last Tuesday, **Elana Myers Taylor(SLIDE)** became the oldest Winter Olympian to win a gold medal, at 41, her first Olympic gold.

She edged out the German by 0.04 seconds to win the women's mono bobsled.

Growing up, Taylor played softball and wanted to become a professional softball player. In college, it became the center of her life, yet she **struggled** with depression and an eating disorder.

She played professionally, but still felt like something was missing in her life. She started researching different religions and found Jesus.

She said, "All of a sudden I just started crying, I was reading the book and it just hit me that Jesus is the way." "It was so strong and so powerful."

In bobsledding she **debuted** in the Winter Olympics in 2010. She said her ultimate aim is to glorify God. "Regardless of whether I win a gold medal or never compete again, I just have to trust that God has a plan for my life, and I'm called to be his representative through the sport and outside of the sport,"

(<https://www.christianitytoday.com/2026/02/christian-winter-olympics-milan-bobsled-hockey/>)

And it's Elana's relationship with Christ that has helped her battle perfectionism and anxiety.-----

Elana had turned to Jesus and wants to live all of her life as his representative, with him as Lord.-----

Elana is famous, and we're not. But I pray we all will come to Jesus for forgiveness, and produce the fruit of repentance too.

What do you need to do?-----

If Jesus is your Saviour and Lord, show it, and honour him.-----

Let's pray.