



sermon notes

date September 12 & 13
speaker Mike Bellanti



Preparing the Way

Matthew 3:1-12

Society and culture are redefining what it means to be a leader and follower.

The appeal made by Jesus: "Follow me"

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea... (vs. 1)

The People's response:

- Confessing sins
- Being baptized

An uncomfortable but simple message:

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (vs. 2)

Repentance

- Feel bad
- Change one's mind
- It is a radical transformation

For the kingdom of heaven is at hand (has come near)

"Reign"

"Dynamic force"

The kingdom of heaven isn't primarily a place you go when you die. It's God's reign—God putting the world right under the rule of the King.

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. (vs. 8)

- "Make fruit deserving of conversion" (The second testament)

- John has called Israel to repentance, confronted religious leaders, and warned that genuine repentance must "produce fruit."

- John's announcement isn't simply, "Jesus is coming to make your life better." It is, God's kingdom is coming, and his arrival brings both salvation and judgment.

- John shifts attention away from himself toward the One who is coming.

Deep Dive Questions:

1. John's first message was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." How is biblical repentance different from simply feeling guilty or trying harder to be a better person?
2. John challenged people who were relying on their religious heritage rather than a transformed life. What are some ways Christians today can rely on religious activity, knowledge, or identity instead of actually following Jesus?
3. Following someone today asks very little of us, but following Jesus requires us to reorder our lives around him. What is one area of your life where Jesus may be inviting you to change direction and follow him more fully?