

to daily keep in touch with him. I need to be part of the 'Body of Christ'.

This week I read that the new temple of God is built of living stones, but scattered stones don't make a temple. A field full of scattered stones is useless. Just ask any farmer whose had a stony field. Jesus has come that we might share life together in an intimate bond of love, that's why he gives us forgiveness. Cause when you live up close with other people you're bound to stand on a few toes.

If I walk away I won't stand on any toes, but I won't be part of the building either, I won't be living in Jesus' promised land, the 'Body of Christ'. Thank God we have forgiveness and can daily empty the bottle and be filled with the Holy Spirit and fire so that we live daily with Jesus and his sisters and brothers enjoying life together with all its wonderful complexity.

Let us pray.
Jesus show us what we need to empty out of

our lives that you might flood us with your presence through the Holy Spirit, so in that area we might be on fire for you. Jesus burn out all the rubbish in our lives and show us how to live your burning passion into everything we say and do. Flood us with the Holy Spirit that we might enjoy sharing all of life with you, trusting your love for us, that we follow you where ever you go. Even if no-one else is. Amen.

6 December 2009

ADVENT 2—FORGIVE

Luke 3:1-6



John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for Jesus. He did that by 'preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' (Luke 3:3) Unlike advertising John didn't come to create an artificial need that he could then meet with his product. John didn't have anything for sale.

What was John's role? To prepare the way for Jesus, so that people would be open to a new relationship with God. Not one which was form and ritual, but one that was person to person. God's not interested in ritual and process, he's after a heart to heart relationship with us. One which burns with the same passion he has for us.

That's why Jesus baptises us with the

'Holy Spirit and fire'. He isn't after a half-hearted relationship but one that burns with the same total passion and commitment that he has for us. Jesus wants to fill us with that same burning passion for life. For life lived with him whole-heartedly, holding nothing back. Jesus holds nothing back, but gives his all for us.

But I've noticed one thing, you can't fill something that is already full. You've got to empty it first. Then you can fill it.

In a sense John's repentance was the emptying step, so that Jesus could fill people with the Holy Spirit and fire. But you can't fill something that is already full.

If I'm full of myself and my own importance there simply isn't any room for Jesus. If I'm full of the hurts of life there's no room for Jesus. If I'm focused on what I'm hoping for, MY goals, MY ambitions, MY hopes and MY dreams, then there's no room for Jesus.

When it came to repentance what were some of the things people had to empty out? "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none..." (Luke 3:11) Emptying out greed, the desire to have more than I really need. Empty out finding security in the amount I possess.

To the tax collectors John said; "Don't collect any more than you are

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Reaching Out with the Love of Jesus that All my Know, Worship & Grow in Christ

required.” (Luke 3:12) They needed to empty out their lust for money and the comfort it could afford them. They needed to empty themselves of lives lived for pleasure, putting earthly pursuits above the pursuit of the Lord, and from sinking their life into acquiring ‘name, fame, and game’.

other. You cannot serve both God and Money (Mammon).” (Luke 16:13) They needed to empty out this desire to have possessions more than being possessed and loved by God. They needed to empty out using God to get what they wanted.

The other people who

was in the wilderness wearing clothes made of camel’s hair, and he feasted on locusts and wild honey. So the religious elite had to leave their comfort zone and go out into the wilderness. They had to empty themselves of the system they trusted. And I don’t think they particularly liked the idea.

To the soldiers John said; “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely – be content with your pay.” (Luke 3:14) Do you notice the theme of money, having stuff. I read this week that the opposite of the church isn’t the devil’s kingdom but the kingdom of mammon. Mammon is more than money but the luxury, comfort, wealth, influence, good life it promises. But Jesus said; “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the

If you simply empty a bottle what have you got?

need to be emptied out were the Pharisees and Sadducees, the religious elite. On their own initiative, God’s people created the synagogue. The synagogue was a human-invented attempt to worship God, a substitute for God’s way.

Did you notice, John wasn’t in any building? He wasn’t in a synagogue, or some grand cathedral wearing robes of authority. John

So John was sent to start the emptying process, calling people to lives of repentance. But he also pointed them beyond himself to the one who could fill them.

After all if you simply empty a bottle what have you got? An empty bottle! Leaving us empty isn’t Jesus goal. Jesus doesn’t want to leave us wandering in the wilderness, but to bring us into his promised land flowing with milk and honey. Flowing indicates much, much more than moments of

enjoyment and happiness, but one that is flowing with the very love of God, because in the person of the Holy Spirit, he is here.

So John pointed people toward Jesus who would fill them.

Jesus would baptise them with ‘the Holy Spirit and fire’.

Jesus would fill his community with the very presence of God, that they might be burning with the same passion he has. A passion that burns out all other rubbish, leaving us loved of God, seeking to love others as God loves us.

Isn’t that interesting; forgiveness isn’t Jesus’ goal, but a means to reach his goal. Without forgiveness we don’t stand a chance at being emptied. But in Jesus I have God’s forgiveness; which empties me so that I can be filled with the very presence of the

living God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, living from the same passion for life that he has.

Jesus is born that we might be forgiven, so that we can live life in God’s loving presence. Once I’m forgiven I’ve only just begun to live. Once the children of

Jesus fills us with the Holy Spirit and fire

Israel crossed the Jordan, leaving the wilderness and entering the Promised Land, they’d only just begun to live.

That proved to be a really hard challenge for them, and they failed, for instead of listening to their LORD, they started looking at everyone else and began doing what they did. God had brought them out of slavery that they might enjoy life in all his

fullness. But after being emptied they allow themselves to be filled with a false love, a false hope, and they lose their close relationship with their LORD and end up in exile, scratching their heads and wandering why.

Jesus seeks to prepare us for life with him

through forgiveness, through us emptying out the bottle so that he can fill it with God’s very presence. But being forgiven is only a means to the end. How do I live life with God? How do I enjoy sharing God’s life in all areas, that his fire might ignite all areas of my life that they glow with his radiance?

I think today’s simple message is; daily empty out all that isn’t of Jesus, so that he can fill every little bit of life with his loving presence through the Holy Spirit. And to live Jesus’ presence, I need