

exciting relationship with Jesus.

John didn't tell the tax collectors not to rip people off; so that they could get in God's good books. Love doesn't rip people off. His message to them was; let your life be a witness to the love the Messiah has for you, as you change living that same love into all you do. Yes, even into the way you do your job. Let it be your witness to the Messiah you trust with your life. It's the nature of love to serve, to build others up according to their need, so that they benefit.

Let us pray.
Jesus thank you for choosing to love us from the depth of your heart. Thank you for not giving us intellectual ideas but that you simply gave yourself. That you gave with your life that we might celebrate your love for us, letting it change us. May our lives be a witness of that change, of your love. May we too serve from the heart, personally, bringing your joyous presence with us into all we do.

May all we do be an act of loving service motivated by you, done in love to you, and in love to those we live, work and play with.
Amen.

Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am
Pastor: Tim 0427326553
Edmund 0429041957



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

13 December 2009
ADVENT 3—SERVE

Luke 3:7-18



In the Gospel reading for today John the Baptist ruffles a few feathers. I'm sure this statement stirred the nest; "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have *Luther* as our father.'" (Luke 3:7,8) What do you think is John's point here, or is he just trying to be difficult to get along with? I don't think he is trying to be difficult to get along with, so there must be another goal John is seeking.

Is John trying to get people to feel guilty so they'll do the right thing? Is guilt the ideal motive for action? No. Does guilt provide a healthy basis for a relationship? No. So

John doesn't want people to take a guilt trip.

Is John trying to get people to perform the right religious act to appease an angry God? Is John calling for more effort because we've been a bit slack, but with more effort and careful attention to detail we can win God's approval? The answer to that question is, No. John hasn't come to setup a new set of religious hoops for us to jump through, that's one of the very things he is knocking down.

What advice would you give to someone who is about to go out on a date with someone they feel is special. I remember one guy who often quoted; 'treat'm mean and keep'm keen'. I'm not so sure

about that. I'd suggest; at least have a shower, so you're fresh and clean. Wear your good clothes and turn up on time to show that this person is special. And if I was talking with a guy I'd say, be generous and pay. Again as a sign that you see this person as special. Isn't it amazing how love changes people, and you can witness it in their lives.

John the Baptist is getting people ready to meet Jesus. So his advice is to have a 'spiritual shower' and to put on your best clothes as a sign that the Messiah is important to you. As a sign of your intentions. The Messiah is coming and he wants this relationship to change people's lives because of the Messiah's love for them.

No wonder John got angry when he saw people playing religious politics, trying to score. The Messiah isn't someone to be used and abused to get what you want. That's not the sort of relationship Jesus is interested in. He certainly isn't out to use you to simply get what he wants. Who wants to be in that sort of abusive relationship?

The Messiah certainly doesn't. He has come to serve us with his life, out of a heart of love. You're special to him, so special he serves you with his life. You witness his love in the way he lives.

John is giving people a 'religious shower' – that's baptism, and then he opens their eyes to all the opportunities that surround them in everyday life to show their love in the way they live, serving others. Changed

because of this loving relationship. Changed as they prepare to meet their Messiah, living lives that show he is special. It is to be witnessed in their lives. If I made a lot of noise about how special you were, but didn't change to include you in my life, but went on living

Has Jesus changed me Or...

the same as before. If my life didn't witness any difference, what would you think about all my words?

So today John is probing the witness of my life. Has Jesus changed me, or am I living as if he makes no difference? Am I living just like everyone else who has left Jesus out of their life? Again this isn't a guilt trip, but a service call, to help me keep my relationship with Jesus healthy and

vibrant. What's the witness of my life? I know the witness of Jesus' life.

One of the great dangers of any long term relationship is that we begin to take each other for granted, and before you know it you're treating each other no different to anyone else.

Sometimes it is easy to treat the other person with less respect that you would a total stranger you're

meeting for the first time. There I'm polite, take time to listen, but with familiar relationships it is so easy to make assumptions, take short-cuts cause you've done it before, and be in a hurry, after all I don't need to take time to talk, we know each other!

John reminds me today that Jesus has come to share his life with me in a relationship based on his love for me. A love

that changes me, a love that motivates me and brings joy into my life.

That's what Paul means when he speaks about, 'the peace of God that transcends all understanding'. Love isn't captured by the brain. It goes way beyond, to a deeper more intimate place that shapes my whole being, and hence my whole life.

What parent would have a wardrobe of clothes and leave their child naked. Love would compel us to clothe our child sacrificing some of ours. That's the nature of love; to serve, to meet the needs of those who they love with the resources at hand. Most parents would go without so their children can benefit; that's the nature of love. If I were to indulge myself, neglecting those I'm closest to me, what

would your response be?

Here John is getting the people ready to meet Jesus. First introductions can be awkward but exciting at the same time. He's given them a good shower and helped them put on the clothes of love, the clothes of

...am I living just like everyone else?

service.

Which reminds me of Jesus on the night when he was betrayed. There he also put on the clothes of service. "Jesus got up from the meal, took of his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciple's feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around his waist." (John 13:4,5)

These are the clothes of love, the clothes of service, the natural, glorious attire of love.

Today John in a sense reminds me of my first love; Jesus. This is not an intellectual pursuit; Jesus is a living, breathing, real person, who seeks to love us as he washes the dirt away, and breathes his breath of life into us that we too can clothe our lives in acts of service, the natural, glorious attire of love.

I don't think John is out to give me a hard time so I feel guilty, but he doesn't want me missing out on living this relationship to the full. Jesus hasn't come to give himself half-heartedly, but fully, joyfully, enthusiastically, generously, that we might know the depths of his unlimited love for us. I don't want to miss out on living this wonder special, vibrant,