

# **“Getting Lost?”**

**(Luke 3:1-6)**

**Dr. Richard S. Koole**  
**Chapel Pointe**  
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## **I. Introduction**

### **A. The crazy man in the desert**

1. Word spread like wildfire
  - a. Some wild man out in the desert
2. He was odd
  - a. Clothes made of camel’s hair
  - b. Ate grasshoppers and wild honey
  - c. Slept in caves in the desert
3. Had an almost magnetic attraction
  - a. His charismatic power
  - b. People flocked to the Jordan valley to see him
4. His simple message
  - a. ***“Prepare the way for the Lord”***
5. Could he be “the one?”
  - a. People responded by doing the unthinkable
  - b. Down in the Jordan River
6. We last saw him at his birth 30 years earlier
  - a. When his dad proclaimed, “His name is John!”
  - b. We call him “The John Baptist”

7. Jesus would call him the greatest man who ever lived

a. (Matthew 11:11) ***“I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen among women anyone greater than John the Baptist;”***

## **B. What is greatness?**

1. Mark Twain

Mark Twain was a distinguished looking figure in his later years. One day he was strolling in the park when a little girl pattered up to him and asked if she could walk with him. Highly flattered, Twain told her stories for an hour, then gave her a nickel and said, *“Now run along home....and when you grow up you can tell your friends you once walked with Mark Twain.”* *“Mark Twain!”* echoed the little girl, bursting into tears. *“I thought you were Buffalo Bill!”*

2. Greatness today?

- a. The controversy over Michael Jackson
- b. The GR Press headline..... *“The world loses a hero”*
- c. The difference between a “celebrity” and a “hero”

3. God’s definition of greatness is much different

## **C. John the Baptist was great**

1. God used him to shatter the 400 years of silence

a. The “thunder” in the desert

2. All Jerusalem and Judea came to hear him

a. Had been 400 years since a prophet of God thundered like this one

b. And he was different from all the others

3. His was a stinging message

## **II. Review**

### **A. The birth of Jesus**

## B. 30 years of silence since chapter 2

## C. John emerges as a man in chapter 3

1. Oh how he grew during his 30 years in the desert

## III. Text

### A. The Setting (v. 1-2)

1. Both Matthew and Luke tell the story

a. Matthew 3:1 “(1) ***In those days** John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea”*

1. “*in those days*”

2. Jesus and John now both about 30

\*Age to become a teacher...Rabbi

3. Luke makes sure you know the exact time

b. Luke 3:1-2

*(1) In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Tracoonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—(2) during the priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.*

2. Early readers would have understood exact time

- a. Let me give a brief overview

3. *In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar*

- a. Julius Caesar

- b. Octavian...Caesar Augustus

1. When Jesus was born

- c. Tiberius Caesar

1. During the life and crucifixion of Jesus

4. *when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea*

a. The Governor during the crucifixion

5. *Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene*

a. The Herod clan

b. What a family

c. Herod the Great

1. During the birth of Jesus

d. Herod's boys

1. The key is Herod Antipas

a. Had John the Baptist beheaded

b. Judged Jesus at his trial

6. *“during the priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas,”*

a. The chief priests at the crucifixion

**B. The Messenger (v. 2)**

*“the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.”*

*1. His job*

a. The closing words of the O.T.

Malachi 4:5-6 *“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”*

b. The next thing on God's schedule would be the voice of the King's herald

c. A voice crying out in the wilderness

(Isa. 40:3) ***“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”***

d. Preparation for a presidential visit

1. Announcements
2. Preparing the way for the motorcade
3. President Ford’s funeral
4. Closed roads, etc.

e. The job of a “herald” back then was to prepare the way of his Lord

1. Announce the coming king
2. Go ahead and prepare the road for the king
  - a. Get rid of obstructions

f. Jesus confirmed that John was the chosen Herald

(Mt. 11:14) ***“And if you will receive it, this is Elijah, who was to come”***

## ***2. His greatness***

(Matthew 3:4)

***(4) John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.***

- a. John didn’t dress like a great man
  1. Clothes made of camel’s hair
  2. He ate locusts & wild honey
  3. Probably lived in a cave
- b. He was willing to sacrifice his own comfort
- c. He knew his job was to turn their attention toward Jesus

- d. He was humble regarding self....yet bold regarding the things of God
- e. When Jesus defined greatness

(Matthew 5) *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

- f. John really didn’t matter
  - 1. John was just a “herald”

### **C. The Desert (Luke 3:2)**

Luke 3

*...the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.*

Matthew 3

*(1) In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea*

- 1. The Judean Desert
- 2. Moved to the Jordan River
  - a. Describe

### **D. The Challenge (Luke 3:3)**

*(3) He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*

- 1. *“A baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”*

2. Matthew simply says .... “Repent!”

(2) saying, “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.*”

a. Greek..... “*metaniew*”

1. to be converted
2. to turn around
3. to change from sin to holiness

b. to start all over

3. Shocked the Jews

a. They thought they were already righteous

b. “covenant kids” of father Abraham (v.9)

c. John said “*God could turn these stones into children of Abraham*”

4. The baptism of John the Baptist

a. Jews went through a daily washing ceremony

1. But it was just a ceremony
2. Watching the guy wash on the Kibbutz

b. Only Gentile proselytes were baptized

1. Sign of true repentance
2. To acknowledge they were sinners

c. John asking Jews to admit their own sinfulness

1. Repent...and ask to be forgiven
2. Just like the Gentiles they hated

5. Caused tremendous opposition

a. Especially among the religious leaders

- b. John called them a bunch of snakes
- 6. We live in a most unusual wilderness
  - a. The Christian roots in our community
    - 1. Called the “New Jerusalem”
    - 2. Children of the Covenant
    - 3. Social trapping of Christianity
    - 4. Very few “unchurched”
    - 5. But many of them are “unsaved”
  - b. Lots of good things won’t save you
    - 1. Baptism will not save you
    - 2. Being born into a certain family will not either
    - 3. Going to church won’t save you
- 5. Aaron DeRidder
  - a. Missionary to Papua New Guinea
  - b. How people respond in Papua New Guinea
    - 1. Hear the message of Christ and want it
  - c. Difference in Grand Rapids
  - d. If he only had 5 minutes with a person
    - 1. Would first try to get them lost
    - 2. Can’t save a person who doesn’t realize they are a lost sinner
  - e. We’re surrounded by people who think they’re okay
    - 1. And many churches fail to confront our sinfulness

f. Romans makes it real clear

*“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)*

*“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)*

*“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8)*

*“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,” (Romans 8:1)*

4. The true message of repentance rocked the world

### **E. The Voice (Luke 3:4-5)**

*(4) As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: A voice of one calling in the desert, “Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. (5) Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth.*

1. How to straighten the paths

a. The crooked street in the world

b. In John’s time

1. When a king traveled the desert, workmen preceded him to clear debris and smooth out the roads to make his trip easier.

2. Getting their hearts ready for Jesus

a. He was “getting them lost”

b. Because of John, a large number of people were ready to receive Jesus’ message

### **F. The Kingdom (Luke 3:6)**

*(6) And all mankind will see God’s salvation.”*

1. All will some day acknowledge the work of Jesus

a. Not saying all will be saved, however

2. Matthew 3:1-2 tells us a little more

*(1) In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea (2) saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.*

a. Term only used by Matthew (32 times)

1. Lots of debate

b. The rule of God on earth through the Messiah:

1. Jesus was about to be announced

\*near

2. Yet the nation would need to repent

\*that didn't happen

\*will happen upon his return

3. What if all had repented and accepted Jesus?

a. The kingdom would have come then

b. John would have been Elijah

c. God knew they wouldn't

d. The kingdom wasn't cancelled...it was postponed

## **G. The Response (Matthew 3:5-6)**

1. How Israel responded initially

(Matthew 3:1-6)

*(5) People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan.*

*(6) Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.*

a. Multitudes responded to him

b. His was not a sugar-coated message

1. He didn't tell them what they wanted to hear
2. Yet they were drawn to hear him
- c. ...and they were shocked
  1. There was a revival going on
  2. Normally the only ones baptized like this were Gentiles converting to Judaism
    - a. and the Jews hated them
    - b. now Jews were acting like Gentiles
- d. Jews were down in the water with John confessing that they were sinners and needed to be set free
- e. John was asking them to risk being ostracized
  1. He asked them for a commitment
  2. It was baptism that caused a Jew converted to Christianity to be disowned by his own family
- f. Baptism today....Jews and others
2. But, eventually they rejected him and his message
  - a. Chopped off John's head
  - b. Crucified Jesus
  - c. When the religious leaders show up in v.7

## **IV. Conclusion**

### **A. Silence shattered by a thunderous roar in the wilderness**

### **B. The keys to remember**

1. The need for personal repentance
  - a. Getting people lost

a. My passion for Chapel Pointe

1. A voice crying in the most unlikely wilderness

2. Recognizing greatness

a. Let's reflect upon some Heroes