

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 21 February 2021

Sermon Title : Preparing the Way

Speaker : Rev John Foo

Text : Mark 1:2-11

INTRODUCTION

The Gospels according to Mark, Matthew and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels because they share many similarities in their gospel accounts. Yet Matthew and Luke provide a lot more details compared to Mark, which is why we usually make references to Matthew and Luke even as we read the gospel of Mark.

Mark begins by quoting one of the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah, who prophesied the coming of a messenger who would prepare the way for the Messiah. (vv.2-3) Mark was referring to John as that messenger or forerunner who had appeared. John was conducting his ministry at the river Jordan calling the people to repentance, baptising them in the river, and in that event, Jesus was also seen coming forward to be baptised by John.

Just as John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ's first coming, we too can see ourselves preparing the way for Christ's second coming. And just as John was preparing the hearts of the people to receive Christ into their lives, we too can see ourselves preparing our hearts to allow Christ into our lives to have His sovereign way in us.

Who is John the Baptist?

John was the son of Zechariah the priest and Elizabeth, who were both very advanced in years before they had him. John was related to Jesus as Jesus' mother, Mary, was Elizabeth's relative. It was foretold to John's parents that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb, and he would later go in the spirit and power of Elijah to make ready the hearts of the people for the Lord's coming. John was in the wilderness when he received the commission from God to begin his public ministry, going around proclaiming a baptism of repentance. John was calling the people to come forward to be baptised, to show that they were repentant of their sins and turning back to God for forgiveness.

Even though baptism was a new practice at that time as there was no such practice in Old Testament time, people from the country were flocking to John seeking baptism and to listen to him.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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How did John live his life while preparing the way?

1. **John lived simply and not for creature comforts (Mark 1:6)** – John lived in the wilderness, wearing very basic clothing and eating locusts and wild honey.

When Christians begin to live simply, we can free ourselves up to focus on other more important and meaningful things in life; to make way for Christ.

- We often get caught up with how much we can earn, the status we can achieve or how far we can go. We look for pleasures to enjoy ourselves and also go after material things. This is because our society has prepped us to live for these things. We spend much time and effort on them and this is likely the same case in John's time but John kept himself from all these.
 - We have to be very careful not to spend an inordinate amount of time just living for the material things that have no lasting value or significance. We need to make way for Christ in our hearts.
 - When our heart is crowded with too many unimportant things, there is no room for Christ. Unimportant things are in our hearts because of our love for them, so we need to kill our love for them in order to direct our love to Jesus.
2. **John exalted Christ and not himself (Mark 1:7)** – John's ministry was a powerful tool that was attracting a lot of people to him. (v.5) Yet John, in true humility, did not promote himself. At the height of his ministry, John said that somebody mightier than he was going to come, the strap of whose sandal he was unworthy to stoop down and untie.

If we want to prepare the way for Christ to reign in our lives and in our church, then Christ has to take centre-stage. Each time if somebody tells us how well we have done in whatever we do, we should give the credit to Christ.

- We need to know that whatever ministries we are involved in do not belong to us. We are simply called by God to be faithful stewards in that particular area in our ministry. Only God is the owner. If ever our ministry start to revolve around us, and we find it difficult to let go of the ministry, we will start to think that we are indispensable to the ministry. We will start robbing God of the honour and glory that is due to Him. We will be usurping Christ in the ministry and taking the place of honour for ourselves.
- Besides ministry, John's deference to Christ is also a fine reminder for us in our lives where we tend to want to exalt ourselves. John knew that he was there just to prepare the way for Christ. Even though he had a powerful ministry, it

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was transient and was meant to be there for the greater person to come. In whatever we do, Christ must increase and we must decrease. (John 3:30)

3. **John submitted to Christ's way, not his own way (Matt 3:13-15)** – John was trying to prevent Jesus from coming to be baptised by him because John recognised that Jesus was greater and felt that it was beneath Jesus' position to be baptised by John. Yet when Jesus told him "Let it be so to fulfil all righteousness", John consented. John did not insist on his own way despite it being right in his eyes.

Christ cannot have His way in us if we do not surrender control of our lives to Him.

- Very often we still contend with God to have things our own way. We say we exalt Him but by our actions, our words and our lives, we do not.

CONCLUSION

Christ does not need our over enthusiastic resolutions that come from an emotional excitement. Let us reflect on our lives and declutter from unimportant things so we can live make room for Christ. As we serve in our ministries and live our lives, let us seek to honour Christ by submitting to Him as Lord over all.

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As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

A. Review Sermon Content

Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.

Appoint someone to read Mark 1:2-11 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, ‘This is the Word of the Lord.’

All to respond, “Thanks be to God.” Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now.”

- a. As God's word was read, which verse speaks to you the most?

- b.
 - (i) What is the key takeaway for you from the sermon “Preparing the Way”?
 - (ii) How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 2a. (i) John lived simply and not for creature comforts. How can living for creature comforts hinder us from having room in our heart for Christ in today's world?
- (ii) How does knowing the above impact how you should view your personal comfort, achievements, possessions and other things you spend much time and effort on?
- 2b. What are some tell-tale signs that Christ is not taking centre-stage in our life or ministry?
- 3a. Are you exalting Christ in your actions, words and life?
- 3b. What is one thing you need to change for you to decrease so Christ can increase in your ministry and life?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you achieve 3b in the following week(s) until your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

4. Share your personal testimony on how God has enabled you to live simply so as to make room for Christ.

OR

Give glory to God for the Holy Spirit's help in your life, work or ministry.

5. With a prayer partner, take time to pray for the concerns in 3a, 3b and 3c. Commit to encourage each other to live in preparation to receive Christ into your lives so He may have His sovereign way in you, and for His second coming.

As a group, discuss and pray for wisdom on how your SG can exalt Christ in One Mission or other activities in 2021. Surrender to obey God's way in your ministry and life instead of doing it your way according to your convenience or comfort.

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