

Matthew 3:1-17

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Date: 14 January 2018

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[0 : 00] In your Bible of Matthew chapter 3, our second reading is taken from verses 13 to 17. Matthew chapter 3 is on page 808 in the church bibles. Matthew chapter 3. Now the passage that Edith read to us really is the appearance of John the Baptist. And then in verses 13 to 17 you have the appearance of Jesus.

Verse 13 reads, then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptised by him. John would have prevented him saying, I need to be baptised by you. And do you come to me? But Jesus answered him, let it be so now for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness. Then John consented. When Jesus was baptised, immediately he went up from the water and behold the heavens were opened to him. He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him. And behold a voice from heaven said, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

When you read the Bible, one of the things that you need to look for is you need to look for things that don't fit. You need to look for things that jar.

You need to look for things that seemingly don't go together. And I don't know whether you've picked that up between the first half of John 3 and the second half of John 3, but there's something there which doesn't fit.

[1 : 44] There's something there which doesn't go together. It's how you should feel when you come to the Lord's baptism. John the Baptist in the first half of the chapter has said, Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

That this coming one, he is going to be the baptiser. And yet Jesus comes to the Jordan, to John, to be baptised by him.

What's going on? I thought Jesus was the baptiser. That's what John the Baptist's message is. How come the baptiser is to be baptised by the Baptist?

It doesn't seem to fit together. What are we to make of this baptised baptiser? What can we see in this baptised baptiser?

First of all, Matthew chapter 3 shows us the emergency Jesus creates. The emergency Jesus creates. And the reason for the emergency is found in verse 2.

[2 : 46] It's one word. John's word in verse 2. It is repent. Repent. For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The kingdom of heaven has come near. Now when it says the kingdom of heaven, it doesn't mean heaven exactly. It means the kingdom that has its origin in heaven.

The kingdom that is from God who is in heaven. And the kingdom of God has come near because the king of the kingdom is about to come near. Jesus is about to come to do his ministry and in his work.

And that creates an urgency and an emergency. Their response must be they must repent. Israel was familiar with this Old Testament idea.

The last book of the Old Testament, the book of Malachi. Malachi. The people in Malachi said they were really upset about their lot. They were upset the way things were and how things were going.

[3 : 48] And they said, where is the God of justice? Where is the God of justice? As if to say that the Lord needs to come and put things right and sort things out.

And the Lord's response in Malachi 3 is, behold, I send my messenger. And he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.

And the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But then there was this issue. When the law that was promised in Malachi 3 actually arrived, here's the problem.

Who can stand when he appears? And he says, I will draw near. I will come for judgment. The Lord's coming isn't all good news.

There's this element of emergency and crisis. He's saying to the people in Malachi's day, he's saying, are you really sure that you want the Lord to come?

[4 : 51] Who can endure the day of his coming? There's this crisis and emergency. And the response that you need to make to his coming, John the Baptist says, is repent.

Because the kingdom of heaven has come near. Now what does it mean to repent? It doesn't really mean just to be sorry for something. That is part.

But to say sorry is not really repentance. In fact, the word sorry is not found in the Bible at all. It's not really just to change one's mind. That's what it's sometimes said.

But that is from the essence. To repent is to turn the whole person from a wrong direction to a right direction.

The classic statement is what we often use for our assurance of pardon in Isaiah 55. Where Isaiah says to the people, he says, seek the Lord while he may be found.

[5 : 48] Call upon him while he's near. And then let the wicked forsake his way. And the unrighteous man is false. And let him return to the Lord that he may have mercy on him.

And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. That is the idea of repentance. It is a forsaking. It is a leaving of your wicked ways and your sinful thoughts.

And a returning wholeheartedly, whole life to the Lord. And God wonderfully will have mercy. And abundantly pardon. And this repentance that John speaks with, speaks about, begins with this acknowledgement.

It begins with this acknowledgement that I am unfit for the kingdom of heaven. That I am unfit to meet this king of the kingdom that is coming.

That's what repentance is. Now you've got some picture of this emergency that John gives us. He gives us some snapshots. And he gives them to us in verse 10 and verse 12. He says, this emergency, this crisis is something like, let's call the picture in verse 10, Jesus the axe man.

[7 : 01] Look at verse 10. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

That's what Jesus' coming is like. He comes with an axe in his hand. It's going to be like the tree in Sphagata. Who comes with his chainsaw. And looks at the tree.

And sees the tree is no longer bearing fruit. And he fires it up. And cuts down the tree. Any tree that doesn't bear fruit. That doesn't reflect repentance.

Will be cut down. And already that's the case. Well let's see the second picture. Jesus the axe man. And then Jesus verse 12. Jesus the thresher. We're not farmers we.

But verse 12 is the picture of a threshing floor. And there's a shovel. A winnowing shovel. And the farmer takes the grain. That's been cut up. And is on the threshing floor.

[8 : 03] And he throws it up into the air. And because it's a windy day. The wind blows it. And it carries the chaff off. But the grain falls to the ground.

Because it's heavier. What's that a picture of? It's a picture of separation. And John says. Here is one who is stronger than I am. And he's going to do that kind of cutting down.

And separating. He's going to bring division. He's coming to bring. And to gather a people to himself. He gathers his wheat into the barn.

But as he gathers his wheat into the barn. He separates it from the chaff. And he throws the chaff into the fire. So you've got these pictures. Of an emergency. Whose emergency is this?

Who needs to be concerned about it? Well verse 5 is the shock isn't it? Then Jerusalem. And all Judea. And all the region about the Jordan.

[9 : 07] Were going out to him. They were going out to him. And the reason they were going out to him. Is because they were baptised by him. In the river Jordan. Confessing their sins. That's strange.

Jews. There's a practice. In Sydney. In evidence probably at this time. And before called proselyte baptism. The Jews had a practice.

If you were a Gentile. Or you were a pagan. Who wanted to become a Jew. Someone who wanted to convert to Judaism. You had to go through this practice. Where the person.

Could go through a certain procedure. In order to become a member. Of the covenant people. In later times. Even as early as John the Baptist. It consisted in three steps.

If it was a male convert. There would be circumcision. And then there would be a baptism. A proselyte baptism. And then you would make an offering. And then the person.

[10:05] Having done those three steps. The circumcision. The proselyte baptism. And the offering. Then that person was counted. As a partner people of God. The covenant people. And that's what happens.

When pagans. Wanted to join. Israel. It was pagans. Who were baptized. In order to join the people of God.

Pagans. But what do you have here? Can you see it? In verse 5. It is. The people of God. You have God's covenant people. You have Jews.

You have Jews. Who. Being baptized. Confessing their sin. They were the ones. Who were saying. We're not fit. For this kingdom. That is coming. And we acknowledge.

That that is a strange thing. Of course. It's difficult. Isn't it? To get Israel. To see that. And John seems to be. Very concerned. About the group. In verse 7 to 9. He sees the Sadducees.

[11:06] And the Pharisees. And he addresses them. Because these people. Think that they don't have. Any need for repentance. They look down.

On John the Baptist. I think John the Baptist. Who is he? He's a Johnny. He's coming from nowhere. Isn't he? They look down. It's too bad. That John the Baptist. Wasn't educated. Or he only had a few years.

In our. Semory. It might have refined him. A little bit. It might have polished him up. Otherwise. This guy. John the Baptist. Everywhere he goes. He creates friction. Everywhere he goes.

Doesn't he? And so John sees. These Pharisees. These lay. Spiritual leaders. And the Sadducees. The priestly ones. The clergy. And when he sees them.

Coming to his place of baptism. He says. Do you know what you are? You're a bunch of snakes. You're a bunch of snakes. Who warned you. To flee from the wrath to come. Do ministers and elders.

[12:06] And deacons. Like to be spoken to like that. He says to them. You need to bring forth fruit. Fruit that reflects. Repentance in your life.

Do you remember what repentance is? It is a sorrow. It is a forsaking. It is a turning away. And a turning to God. You need to show that in your life. And don't you dare begin to say.

We've got Abraham as our father. For I tell you. God can raise up children from Abraham. Out of these stones. There was probably nothing.

In the popular mindset. Of Jesus' day. So automatic. As the merit. And the benefit. That Abraham conveyed.

On his people Israel. That's not everyone. But there was an element. In the popular Jewish mindset. Of the day. That all Israel.

[13:05] All Israel. Had a share. In the world to come. And the reason why. Israel had a share. In the glory of the world to come. Was because their connection.

To Abraham. There was one little rabbi. He drew a picture of Abraham. Seated at the gate of Gehenna. Of hell. Just in case. Some Israelite. By mistake.

Might be consigned. To Gehenna. And Abraham was seated at the gate. In order. To keep any Jew. From having to enter hell. If you have Abraham.

As your father. If you are descended from him. Among the people. You are immune. From any judgment. Or any need. From repentance. Gents. And John the Baptist says. No. This is your emergency.

You need this. He's trying to get through to them. Do you remember. When you'd play as children. And you'd play a game of children.

[14:02] You'd be shooting guns and arrows. Or. I don't know what else you'd do. But you'd be playing there. And then suddenly. Would kind of. They would. They would put on a pretend.

Bulletproof vest. Wouldn't they? And so. It was like their. Their. It was like their bullets. Couldn't hurt them. You see it don't you. In the Incredibles. Have you seen that film. Children in the Incredibles.

There's a shield. That one of the children. He puts over him. And so. Nothing. Can. Nothing. Can. I think we need to pray. To. Janet. Is not. Very well. Let's bow our heads in prayer. I want to do.

Would you.

Have a look. Let's pray. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father.

[14 : 56] We. We. Want to pray. For your help. And your care. For our sister. Father. We thank you. For those. Who have. Medical skills. We pray. That you would. Bless.

Them now. And we thank you. So much. For your loving care. And your concern. We pray. That. You would. Be with. Uh. Chan it now.

For we pray. In Jesus name. Amen. Let's just take a moment.

And. And.

let's lift the Lord in prayer again let's pray Holy Father we have already confessed this morning that all things are in your hands and we thank you that there is nothing that is outside of your control and we thank you for your love and care, we thank you for Terry and Janet for the blessing that they are and we pray that this issue would not be a major one we pray that it would be

[16 : 54] Janet would be able to get the care that she needs we pray particularly for Terry that you would strengthen him and be with him keep them from anxiety Holy Father we pray now that as we continue to look at your words that you would speak to us our hearts are worried and concerned for our sister who we love but we pray that you might speak to us through your word and you might help us help us and speak to us, bring us comfort and strength for we pray in Jesus name Amen and so they thought didn't they that repentance didn't apply to them and the danger is for you and I that actually we can feel the same can't we we can think I've been baptized I'm a Presbyterian I'm a Baptist and it doesn't really apply to me

I have Calvin as my father and we need to realise don't we that God can raise children out of the chairs that you're sitting on out of these walls God can raise Presbyterians out of this floor and we must never think that this repentance doesn't press in upon us and so I need to ask you today I need to ask you have you ever done this?

have you ever repented? you know the word in verse 2 it says isn't it repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand and that is present continuous it's not just initial it's live a life of repentance and that is what John is calling us to and Jesus said the same thing Jesus is calling you and I to a life that is a constant turning away from wickedness and turning away from our iniquities and turning to God and one of the things we learn as Christians that we realise and as we face Jesus coming we realise that we are not fit for the kingdom of heaven and I am not fit to meet the king and it is only by his mercy isn't it?

it's only by his mercy that I have any reason to stand before him at all and as you grow in grace and as you grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus and the better that you get to know him you will probably find that sense more and more that you need repentance it seems an interesting mark isn't it?

that when you grow in grace you have a clearer and deeper insight into how corrupt your heart is Archibald Alexander in the 18th century 19th century he gave it the Christian life as a picture of a room and the room is completely dark and it's utterly filthy and you know that you're standing in the room and you know that it's dirty and there's a little stream of light and you can see some of the filth enough of the filth to know it's dirty and the more light that comes in the more you see how stinking it is and the amount of filth you see is related to how much light comes in and isn't that the way of the Christian life?

[20 : 20] the more light that we have the more nearer we come to the Lord Jesus the more we know of his word the more we see of our sin and we see how unfit we are and how unworthy we are to be in the kingdom of God now we need to watch that don't we?

we need to watch that because it's really easy to fake it and there are phonies out there spiritual phonies that are constantly telling you about how terrible and evil they are they're a plague and they do it to kind of carry favour with men so we think oh aren't they godly?

we don't have to share in that but I do think we need to realise as Christians that the longer we go on it is a life of repentance you are not for this kingdom the second thing I want you to see is in verses 13 to 15 just look at the place where Jesus stands he stands by the Jordan and he comes to John to be baptised by him and this puzzle John says what are you doing?

verse 14 coming to me to be baptised I need to be baptised by you and your coming to me it doesn't make sense does it? you don't need to be baptised I need to be and Jesus explains to him no no no in one sense you're perfectly right but you see John it is necessary for us at this time to carry out God's will to fulfil righteousness to let it take place and the place where Jesus stands why is that such a problem?

well look at verse 6 look at the text verse 6 and verse 11 who is this baptism of John the Baptist for? it is for sinners those Jews that went out to him for baptism they were doing something they were confessing their sins and John says in verse 11 I baptise you with water for repentance and so what on earth is Jesus the sinless lamb of God?

[22 : 25] sorry good news Janet is I think they don't think it's a stroke just too hot and and and and and and not as bad as we fear is that alright?

can we have a bit of air in this room? I don't want that to happen again is that alright? let's turn it down you don't right now you've not listened to the last 10 minutes but we'll try and get back there okay so who was the who was the baptism of repentance for?

it is for those who had sin a story about Shamil isn't it? Shamil was a guerrilla fighting against the Tsarist regime in Russia in about 1870 and Shamil it wasn't just Shamil and his men it was their wives and their families there was this whole kind of little community fighting against the Russians and there was this tight little universe of kind of bandits outlaws but something happened in Shamil's society someone stole and in a tight little community no one knew it no one knew who did it everything was coming unglued by suspicion Shamil issued a law thou shalt not steal and there was a penalty he says whoever is caught stealing there will be a hundred lashes for the one who is found stealing well you know the story a couple of days later it is found to be his mother and so there is a dilemma he has to make sure his law stands he can't say that's my mother it can't happen to her but he also loves his mother doesn't he he has affection for her he doesn't want her to undergo the lashes so he shuts himself up in his tent in the middle of this kind of outlawed tent for three days and after three days he comes out of his tent and he says the law must be upheld and she must be punished and she must receive the hundred lashes and rightly so because you can't ignore the demands of the law and so there is justice and after she received three lashes Shamil has his real solution his real solution was that he took his mother away and he the leader of that community took the ninety-seven lashes himself he commanded that all of those lashes would be given but he would bear them so the law was upheld the law was upheld and love was satisfied but it was because Shamil stood in the place of the offended and you might say well that's a really good illustration of what Jesus did on the cross but what you need to see is that is what Jesus is doing that is baptism don't you see baptism is what sinners need to have done to them and in verse eleven and verse six when Jesus who didn't need to be baptized because he's not a sinner when he comes and says John baptized me he says I'm standing in the place of sinners John White in one of his books refers to one of the experiences he had as a medical student

I've told him this story before he missed a practical class on sexually transmitted diseases and because John White had missed the class he had to go to the class at night at a time when students didn't normally go to the STD clinic and as he entered the clinic a male nurse met him there was a line of men there waiting for treatment and he said to the male nurse I want to see the doctor that's what everyone wants stand in line said the nurse ah but you don't understand I'm a medical student doesn't matter you've got it the same way as everyone else stand in line in the end he says I managed to explain to him while I was there but I can still feel that sense of shame that made me balk at standing in line with men who had BD and yet Jesus stood in line as he lined up on the Jordan River the Holy Son of God the Holy One of God lined up with a bunch of sinners waiting to be baptized and he identified himself with us he publicly identified with those he came to save he was no sinner himself but he identified with sinners and took his first step on that career that was going to take him to the cross it's as if Matthew could have put in a verse at this point it's as if Matthew could have put in the verse in order that the words of the prophet might be fulfilled he was numbered with the transgressors note the place he stood thirdly and lastly note the assurance [27 : 22] Jesus receives verses 16 and 17 there's two things immediately after Jesus is baptized there's the equipping with God's power by the Holy Spirit the dove comes down the Holy Spirit comes down in the form of the dove but I want us to focus in verse 17 on the expression of God's favour that voice said this is my son the one I love and I'm delighted with him and I wonder what those words would have meant for the Lord Jesus maybe you don't often think God speaks in such a positive way or perhaps maybe you're not used to seeing that tone of delight in God's voice but did you hear what he said he said here is my son here is my son whom I love and I am delighted in him it's a bit like Genesis 1 do you remember Genesis 1 in the creation account it's a phrase that keeps on being repeated isn't it and God saw that it was good and several times and God saw that it was good and God saw what he'd made and it was good and it was good and it was good and in

chapter 1 verse 31

God stands back and he sees everything that he's made and he says that is very good if you can put it in picture form it says it's almost as if God the creator and the designer and the artist he stands back from his work and he looks at it and he says that is great that is very very good I like that I really like that here's my son the one I love I delighted him was that not a great source of assurance for Jesus imagine how he must have felt when he heard those words but it seems to me that it's no wonder that when you come to John's gospel in John chapter 16 verse 32 John 16 verse 32 this is what

Jesus says he says behold the hour is coming indeed it has come when you will be scattered you disciples you will leave me you will be scattered each to his own home and you will leave me alone yet I am not alone for the father is with me I think that is the fruit of a deep assurance that he's been given in his baptism and is this written for his sake alone is it only for Jesus that this is written this is my son whom I love with him I'm well pleased doesn't it also include us I know that we are not sons and daughters of God in the same way that Jesus is the unique son of God but it is true isn't it that we are the adopted children of God the Bible does call us sons of God Romans 8 14 and 15 and it's true that just as God calls Jesus the one he loves or the beloved in verse 17 of

Romans 8 the apostle Paul writing to the Christians in Rome he writes to those plural who are loved by God beloved by God it's the same word and so the father who loves his only son especially loves his sons and daughters who his son has brought to him there's something about that type of assurance that nothing can erase I don't think this verse is here to tell parents to tell children how much they love them that is a great thing to do there isn't it my father is here this morning I don't really talk to him as well but there are times aren't there when a father or a mother expresses their love and appreciation for a child and we remember it that wasn't in your family

I'm terribly terribly sorry but the wonderful thing about the gospel is maybe it wasn't in your family but God says to you this morning if you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that is my son that is my daughter with whom I'm well pleased there's something about that type of assurance that nothing can erase you never know do you the sense of security and assurance that a mere word of relationship can give to someone many of us can bear testimony to that the assurance that we received and the sense of security that we ought to have and yes that comes better less or more with a parent but it comes powerfully to us from God by adoption through Jesus Christ that he has called you a son or a daughter and then in the light of that assurance and security in the midst of darkness and trial and fear and anxiety which you may even be feeling right now can you not say as Terry and Janet can say this morning

[33 : 05] I am not alone for the father is with me and all of this you have and enjoy because the baptiser is baptised let's pray holy father we will remember this sermon for a long time and yet we want to pray that this assurance that you give you give to your son whom you love whom you are delighted in we pray that by faith we might claim those words as our own that we would be a people that repent turn from our wicked ways and turn to you but also we would know that as your people we are loved that we live with that tension and we delight in that father again we pray for terry and janet we pray that you would be very near them we pray that you would draw near them and strengthen them and restore them fully to health in jesus name amen