

Sermon- December 9th 2018. Our Saviors Lutheran Church.

Text- Luke 3:1-9, John The Baptist

What Should We Do?

Grace and Peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, here we are already at our 2nd week of Advent. Most of us are desperately trying to finish all our preparations, shopping, baking, all in advance of the big day on 12/25. Always, the readings for the 2nd Sunday in Advent focus on John the Baptist - the wild man from the wilderness. A preacher that no self respecting ELCA congregation would welcome in the pulpit.

You might not know it but before there were lawyer jokes, or blond jokes, or three guys walked into a bar jokes, or Ole and Lena jokes, we heard good news and bad news jokes.

Sally phones her very busy husband at work. Her husband answers and says, "sorry dear. I'm very busy today and don't have time to chat." Sally replies, "but I've got some good news and bad news for you." Ok, but just give me the good news right now. Sally says sure. "You will be happy to know that the air bags in our new Lexus work perfectly."

So here comes John with what appears like bad news. As I said he is straight out of the wilderness, simple clothes, no Armani for him just a camel skin cloak. Not gourmet food but a guy foraging on locusts and wild honey. Probably lived in a cave.

His message is a strong one. Metanoia. Repent. Turn around, change your life style or stuff will happen. Calls the fat cats brood of vipers. An ax is ready to cut them down and throw them into the fire. Doesn't sound like good news to me.

Is it good news that God is coming to earth to judge and punish sinners. Is it good news that people, who have many possessions, or those whose jobs happen to be tax collecting, or soldiers who have been less than compassionate, will have to stand before a king and face his wrath? Of course, the people of the 1st century were used to this type of theological thinking. They lived with the image of a wrathful God who demanded righteous living or else. And when these people

failed in their righteousness, they had to offer sacrifices like doves or lambs or money, in order to keep a good standing with God. Forgiveness was not a first-century Jewish concept.

What John the Baptist did not know - what he could not know - is that Jesus came to be a Savior. He would come and his judgment would be to say Not Guilty. He would come with good news. Actually amazing news. That Jesus would offer grace to all those sinners and us. That it would be a gift, unmerited and free, so that everyone who believes can receive this gift. Wow.

But what is often lost in all of John's fire and brimstone is the sincerity of the people who heard his message and wanted to change their ways. "What then should we do?" they asked. John gets concrete in his answer. If you have two good coats, give one away. (Yesterday I noticed that I have six in my closet.) John said the same thing about food. If a family had enough food in their pantries to meet their family's need, but their neighbors had none, "how can you not share with them?" John asked. "What can we do?" asked the tax collectors, notorious for pocketing much for themselves. "What can we do?" Asked the soldiers who always seemed to take bribes when someone was accused of a crime. So John simply says, Don't collect more tax than you ought to and don't swindle people. That was John's message.

Well, it's been over 2000 years, and, it's still a good question: "What should we do?" The problem is, few are asking it today. We are busy working, raising children, and doing a gazillion different things that we rarely ask the question - What should we do?

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

WHAT SHOULD WE DO? (Pastor keeps asking the question until someone in the congregation asks the question).

Glad you asked.

This is the answer. If you have two coats, share one. In other words share resources. If you have extra food - share it. If you are a business person, be an honest one. If you are a soldier or a policeman, be a compassionate one. If you are a parent, be tender and fair. If you are a Pastor, be a truthful one. If you are a

truck driver, drive the speed limit. If you are a child, honor your parents. If you are a husband or a wife, be a faithful one. You get the idea.

And above all, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, be real. Love God, serve people, and remember that the Savior has forgiven you. That's the good news. And it's always our good news.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Do the stuff and remember the good news. We are forgiven.

Amen. Let it be so.