

DATE: 26 NOV 2023 | SPEAKER: PS BEN KC LEE | TOPIC: JOHN THE BAPTIST – PREPARING FOR JESUS | SCRIPTURE: [MATTHEW 3:1-12](#)

SPIRITUAL OBJECTIVES

At the end of the sermon discussion, cell members will:

1. Come to grasp how important repentance is to prepare for the return of Jesus.
2. Practise daily repentance that bears fruit.

SERMON SUMMARY

We are prepared for Jesus' return through genuine repentance. True repentance always results in a changed life yielding good fruit. You will be living like Jesus is your leader, allowing Him to influence your affections, attitudes, and actions. Prepare for Christ: Repent! Live! Bear Fruit!

SERMON RECAP

1. The Preparer

- John the Baptist was called to prepare the hearts of the people for Jesus, God's Son ([Luke 1:16-17](#)).
- He had one message, and it was a message of change. Repentance is a message of change.
- To repent is to completely change our direction in life. It is turning back to obey God, trust Him alone and forsake everything ungodly in life.

2. John's Ministry (v5-6)

- John's baptism was a baptism of repentance to prepare the people for Jesus. It included an open confession of sins.
- The first demonstration of that change of heart and mind is submitting to water baptism. When we're baptised, we declare that we've repented of our sins and put our faith in Christ.
- John's ministry catalysed revival.

3. Our King

- He's at hand (v2-3).
- The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is on His way back. Because Jesus is at hand, so is the Kingdom of Heaven.
- This greater One coming after John comes with a greater baptism (v11). The baptism of the Spirit came at Pentecost (v11). The baptism of fire refers to future judgment (v12).
- John announces the coming of the day of the Lord. Jesus will come bringing judgement and salvation.
- The same two options lie before us today: Fruit or fire. Fruitful repentance brings grace (v12a) and fruitless repentance brings fiery judgement (v12b).

- This final separation is the reason for our preparation ([2 Thessalonians 1:7-9](#)). The consequence of ignoring this is the coming wrath (v7) and unquenchable fire (v12).
- The life that pleases God starts with the repentance of sins. Those who repent have no fear of His wrath.

4. Our Preparation

- We get ready for Jesus by repenting! His Kingdom can only be entered through repentance. We cannot have true repentance without a changed life.
- A changed life yields good fruit.
- Characteristics of fruitful repentance:
 - a. Continual (v7) – Fruitful repentance is not a one-time action. It’s a daily denial of the lusts of the flesh, an ongoing death to this world and life in Christ. It’s a life of continually turning away from sin and toward Christ ([Luke 9:23](#)).
 - b. Personal (v9) – Sin is a grave offence against the holiness of God. Repentance that is deep, honest, and personal leads to God’s grace working in our lives. Personal repentance bears the fruit of holiness in our lives.
 - c. Immediate (v10) – The “axe is already at the root” means total destruction. What is chopped down will be thrown into the fire. Act now and get right with God. Not someday, but today.
- We bear good fruit by,
 - a. trusting Christ,
 - b. living with Him as leader to allow Him to influence our actions and,
 - c. faithfully obeying His Word.

In [Matthew 3:1-12](#), John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus. John’s message is to repent and bear fruit in keeping with repentance. Prepare for Christ: Repent! Live! Bear Fruit!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is confession of sins and repentance central to the preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven?

Leader's Notes

*“In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” – **Matthew 3:1-2***

It is stated in the Bible that John the Baptist was called to prepare the hearts of the people for Jesus. And that preparation involves repentance. Repentance is a matter of Lordship – if Jesus becomes our Lord, then we must forsake our old ways (repentance) and live in His ways. If we are not willing to repent and live in accordance with God’s ways, how will we live in His eternal kingdom where He is King and only His ways are practised in this new kingdom? That is why, repentance is central to the preparation of the coming of Christ.

Transition

The regeneration of the world happens through the regeneration of the individual. When we repent, and lead others to do likewise, we are preparing the way for the coming of the Lord.

2. If Christ were to appear today to gather His wheat into the barn and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire, would you be ready? Do you want to be ready?

Leader's Notes

Would you confidently say that you are the wheat and not the chaff right now? How do you know when you're ready?

There are three impulses to help us to be ready (extracted from "How do we Prepare for the Second Coming"):

- The impulse that comes from the glorious prospect of seeing the Lord.
- The impulse that comes from the necessity of suffering before he comes.
- The impulse to be found faithful and vigilant in our particular callings when he comes.

Read the article further for details: [How do we Prepare for the Second Coming](#) by Desiring God.

Transition

As much as we long for Christ's return, we also must prepare ourselves for it. You don't want to be found idling away or pursuing the wrong things when He returns!

3. How does [Romans 8:1](#) help us to grasp the role of continual repentance in our Christian lives?

Leader's Notes

This question calls us to reflect on continual repentance. Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," which means that we have been set free from the consequences of sin – which is death eternal. However, we are still called to continual repentance – a daily acknowledgement of our sins and intentionally moving away from our sinful behaviour.

Many believe repentance for sins is a one-time affair – that initial act of repentance during their conversion. That is an incomplete picture. Repentance also involves the daily denial of the passions of the flesh, an ongoing and constant death to this world and life to Christ.

Closing

Repentance is central to the Christian faith. Repentance reinforces the Lordship of Christ over our lives. Let us not forget to examine our lives daily and to intentionally turn away from our sinful behaviours and lifestyles.

WORKS

Consider dividing the group into micro-groups for a deeper time of sharing as well as praying for the following items:

1. Sermon Application

- Pray for God to convict us of our sins so that we may repent.
- Pray for true repentance so that we may yield good fruits.

2. RiverLife

- Pray for our upcoming mission trips, as well as the Marriage Retreat that will be happening soon.

3. World

- Continue to pray for the conflict in the Gaza Strip between Israel and Hamas, as a truce is reached.
- Pray for the situation in Northern Myanmar where 50,000 civilians are displaced as a result of war.
- Pray for the worsening unrest in Dublin after 3 school children and their caretaker were stabbed.
- Pray for the situation in China where Beijing hospitals have a sudden surge in respiratory illnesses among children.
- Pray for Iceland as a state of emergency is declared over the threat of a volcanic eruption.
- Continue to pray for the Russia-Ukraine war and the avoidance of using nuclear weapons.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Digital Bulletin: rlc.sg/bulletin

1. **Christmas Is Coming! Let's Celebrate Together at RiverLife.** Share the love of Christ with someone this Christmas. Visit our Christmas microsite for details on seeker-friendly services in the month of December: rlc.sg/christmas2023. Write a heartfelt message this festive season and invite someone to our services using RiverLife Christmas cards
2. **Serve in SuperLife.** Serve in SuperLife as a Teacher or Tech Support Crew!
 - Teacher's role:
 - Support the running of weekly SuperLife services for preschool children
 - Care for and manage the children during service
 - Tech support crew role:
 - Serve at our children's services for Kindy (aged 5-6) and Nursery (aged 3-4) levels
 - Operate the Pro-Presenter software on a laptop for videos and slides support
 - Operate the sound panel and microphones for audio support No prior experience needed as training will be provided.
 - Sign up to serve: rlc.sg/serve

CHURCH CALENDAR

1. Church Calendar Highlights

- *Quarter 4*
 - Leaders Huddle – 3 Dec

2. **YA Gatherings (For Young Adults in their 20s). First Saturday Every Month, 5pm-8.30pm Victory Chapel (Level 1).** The YA Gathering is a space where young adults can get together to connect and build community. This gathering is made up of two components – Community Conversations & Communal Dinner – both with a focus on relationship building and life conversations. If you are currently in a cell, register your attendance with your cell leader. If you are currently not in a cell, do register online: rlc.sg/YAgathering-apr-reg.

3. RiverLife Prayer Meetings.

RiverLife Prayer Room. Tue, 8-9.30pm, Victory Chapel.

RiverLife Revive Nights. Wed, 8pm – 9.30pm, Victory Chapel (livestream: rlc.sg/revivenights)

CHURCH MINISTRIES & OPPORTUNITIES

1. **9M Ministry.** The 9M Ministry provides prayer support for expectant mothers on their 9-month journey of pregnancy. Sisters-in-Christ who are fellow RiverLifers are assigned as Prayer Buddies to walk alongside mums who sign up to receive prayer support.
 - Receive Prayer Support: rlc.sg/9m
 - Provide Prayer Support: rlc.sg/serve
2. **Missions Microsite.** Discover how you can go, give and pray for the nations. Let's make a difference in the nations together! For more information, visit rlc.sg/missions.
3. **RiverLife Cares Opportunities.** Signup: <http://rlc.sg/serve-rlcar>
4. **Prayer Ministry.** If you require prayer ministry for any issues you face (eg. worry, fear, etc), you can sign up for RLC's RTF ministry: <https://bit.ly/rlcrtf>

RESOURCES & CONNECTING WITH US

1. **Bible Reading Plan.** The church has provided 3 undated Bible Reading plans that will serve as a resource for those who wish to follow a Bible Reading plan. Link: rlc.sg/brp
 - 2 Year Chronological Bible Reading Plan.
 - 3 Year Bible Reading Schedule (Alternating readings between Old and New Testament passages)
 - Redemptive Historical Bible Reading Plan (At your own pace, focusing on the redemption story)
2. **RiverLife Podcast.** The RiverLife Podcast allows you to listen to RiverLife content anytime, anywhere! The link to go to is rlc.sg/podcast or simply search **'The RiverLife Podcast'** on Spotify.
3. **Spiritual Growth Resources.** We have put together a curated list of recommended resources for the RiverLife family. These resources (books, articles, podcasts and videos) are recommendations for the various spiritual growth stages as you seek to grow deeper in the River of God this year. You can access them at rlc.sg/resource. This list will be continually populated throughout the year.
4. **Testimony.** If you have a testimony to share, you can write to us at stories@riverlife.org.sg to share with us your testimony as an encouragement to others.
5. **Stay Connected with RLC.** Follow us to stay updated on latest church news and happenings.
 - **WhatsApp Broadcast:** Text 'Subscribe' to 8923 1939
 - **Telegram Channel:** t.me/RiverLifeChurch
 - **Facebook & Instagram:** [@riverlifechurchsg](https://www.facebook.com/riverlifechurchsg)

GIVING LINKS & QR CODES

ONLINE GIVING TO MISSIONS

Donate digitally:

PayNow

Log in to your bank's existing mobile banking app. Scan this QR code on the right OR enter UEN No. 200100806DTNO.

Interbank Transfer

UOB Account 450-309634-4

Kindly indicate "Missions" in your transaction reference.



ONLINE GIVING TO RIVERLIFE CHURCH

Contribute your tithes and offering digitally:

PayNow

Log in to your bank's existing mobile banking app. Scan this QR code on the right OR enter UEN No. 200100806DSCB.

Interbank Transfer

RiverLife Church Bank Account: DBS Autosave 029-902431-0

Bank Code: 7171 / Branch Code: 029



ONLINE DONATION TO RIVERLIFE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Donate digitally:

PayNow

Log in to your bank's existing mobile banking app. Scan this QR code on the right OR enter UEN No. 200711586WDON

Kindly indicate your NRIC No. under the Bill Reference to qualify for tax deduction.

