

Title: WHAT GOOD NEWS? LUKE 3:7-18  
(Chatham, NJ; 12/16/12, AM) [Pt – Exegesis, Topical]

Theme: Inherent in the demands for repentance John's was actually a message of good news.

Purpose: To explain how the demand for repentance brings about good changes and positive results for a better life.

Introduction:

1. The prophetic writings are a blend of condemnation and comfort, as well as a call to repentance along with an offer of peace: tandems that can't be separated.
2. Remember that John is the greatest of the prophets; his message comes right out of the prophetic tradition.
3. Luke 3:18 says that he preached good news.
4. How can this be when he says, "You're wrong and you'll be condemned"? How can he call them vipers and warn them that judgment is coming?
5. Our initial recoil must be experienced in the complete message and a fuller understanding of why his message is good news.

I. Winning Friends? (7-9) We'd rather be the nice guys.

A. The negative

1. He calls them vipers
2. He reveals that there is a coming wrath
3. Worthless trees will be destroyed: thrown in the fire
4. God does not overlook irresponsible, sinful behavior

B. The positive

1. As with all the positives in this, we have to make the correct assumptions
2. C. S. Lewis recognized the need for this if people were ever going to understand Christian teachings (see newsletter from Mars Hill Audio)
3. Despite all the bad in the world, God is at work – he can raise up children from stones; he is able to bring life out of the Valley of Dry Bones
4. Though John addressed the presumption of the Jewish leaders, he reminds all of us that he can do the impossible
5. Despite human depravity and sin, God is at work

II. You must change, 10-14

A. Repentance is specific

1. He tells different groups to change specific behaviors
2. Similarly Paul's lists of the works of the flesh are specific
3. If John were speaking to us today he would challenge one result of the sexual revolution that says sexual self-expression is good and repression of impulses is bad (alleged sex experts began to parrot this after Kinsey's false reports)
4. He would say sexual immorality incurs wrath of God, Eph. 5:3-6
5. John would also express his opposition to gay marriage (see examples)

B. The positive

1. This assumes there is something called sin within each of us; we can't just point the finger at others
2. The good news here is that you can always make things right; you can live differently; your behavior is not determined by genetics
3. You can be born again, John 3:3-5; God's Spirit can heal you
4. Isn't admitting your sin worth that?

### III. Messianic Expectations, 15-17

#### A. Negative images

1. The messiah has a winnowing fork in his hand
2. He will designate some good and some bad
3. He also says that some ideas are good while others are bad
4. Truth can be known and must be embraced
5. Not everything comes in shades of gray
6. We can't live in the shadows but must come into the light

#### B. The positive

1. We too often assume the softer side of Jesus: meek and gentle
2. Yet he will judge those who do evil
3. The good news is the gathering of wheat into his barn
4. It is also good news because justice will prevail
5. Evil will not be able to hide any longer behind a barrage of verbal distortions

#### Conclusion:

1. John's message: God is coming.
2. Preparation is simple: repent.
3. The result is comfort and peace for those who accept the terms.
4. Honest people recognize their sin.
5. They recognize that God offers grace.
6. Don't let the negative side deter you from believing.
7. The Gospel is good news.