

Title: RENEWING OUR FAITH, LUKE 3:7-18
(Chatham, NJ; 12/13/15, AM) [Pc – Topical]

Theme: Reading John's message provides some essential ideas to renew our commitment.

Purpose: To reaffirm our faith, to simplify our lives, and to anticipate the coming of Christ.

Introduction:

1. Think of Luke 3:7-18 as a dialogue with John the Baptist.
2. John talks with the people who came to him; think about us having a discussion with him.
3. Remember that John "preached good news to the people," 18.
4. Last week I asked you to remember the images of who John was; this week I ask that you hear his "voice in the wilderness."
5. Think about the dialogue in a way that applies to us today.

I. People Came for Baptism, 7: Reaffirm Your Baptismal Commitment

- A. John calls for genuine, not hypocritical, faith
 1. Matthew notes that John addressed the Pharisees and Sadducees who came for baptism: produce fruit consistent with real change
 2. Luke says that he addressed "the crowds."
 3. Luke may want us to know that John's words against self-righteousness are meant for all of us as well as those who display it most obviously.
 4. We must never exploit our religion as a means of elevating ourselves.
- B. His message of repentance is specific
 1. He addresses those of us who stockpile more than we need
 2. He addresses tax collectors who abuse their power to line their pockets
 3. He addresses soldiers who use their power arbitrarily and engage in extortion
 4. He imitates the prophet Malachi who addressed the priests' improper offerings, the faithlessness of the divorce culture, and those who failed to adhere to the tithe offerings; these were specific and pointed.
 5. What might he say to you and me?
- C. Our Tree and Its Fruit
 1. Our baptismal commitment was and is to bear good fruit, Luke 3:9
 2. Make the tree good, Mt. 12:33
 3. Your inner self can be recast and remade by the love of Christ, Eph. 3
 4. Don't gloss over your sins only to appear righteous
 5. Cleanse the inside, Mt. 23:26
 6. A good tree will bear good fruit: works, virtue, and anything excellent

II. John Responds to "What shall we do?" (10-14): Simplify Your Life

- A. Giving, not getting, is the true spirit of Christmas
 1. John tells them if you have more than you need, give away the excess
 2. Paul echoes just such an idea in 2 Corinthians 8:13 – your abundance should supply their lack; at some point perhaps their fortunes will be reversed
 3. He also reminds the leaders in Ephesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," Acts 20:35.
- B. Soldiers, be content with your pay, 14
 1. Lack of contentment may have lead to extorting money from others
 2. Russian police made friends pay a "fine" on the spot
 3. Ex-Muslim, Hirsi Ali, was surprised that a policeman in Holland gave her a ticket rather than make her pay on the spot

4. Paul learned to be content, Phil. 4:11-13
5. God hates grumbling and complaining
6. Jude 16 describes the ungodly as “grumblers and malcontents”
7. Such an attitude spawns all manner of other evils

III. Anticipate the Coming of Christ . . . Again, 15 – 17

- A. John now inspires anticipation and hope in his audience
 1. Not me, but the one who comes after me
 2. He is better: I am unworthy to untie his sandal
 3. He will say to Jesus: you should be baptizing me
 4. John 1:30, “After me comes one who ranks before me.”
 5. The hope of Israel is the anticipation of redemption, Luke 1:69
- B. Later, Paul can speak of joy and peace, Philippians 4:4, 7
 1. They are the calling cards of Christ’s coming
 2. They are also by-products of anticipating his second coming
 3. It is for this reason that John’s exhortations can be called “good news,” Luke 3:18
 4. Let us, today, be filled with joy and peace

Conclusions:

1. Hear John’s “voice in the wilderness” anew.
2. Reaffirm the commitment you made at baptism to live a new life.
3. Simplify your life by giving away the excess, especially if it keeps you from serving faithfully and fully.
4. Anticipate his coming: let hope inspire you with joy and peace.
5. Commit and re-commit today.