

Advent 2 2018

Luke 3: The Lord our Righteousness

Luke 3:1-14 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?” And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.” Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”

In the Name of Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is prepared for the Last Day: of our lives, of this order of sin! And since HE is prepared, WE are...ALL...prepared!

Let me go a step further! The LORD our God is at peace, ready for the Day of Judgment—EVEN IF—even THOUGH, even WHEN...WE...ARE...NOT—ready for the Day of Judgment!

Therefore, we can bear with the first Baptizer—even rough words of vipers and offspring—since we have been baptized by the Second Baptizer, with the inner fires of God’s Love for us: His Holy Spirit!

John put fruits of changing our lives—repentance—in the most ordinary terms of the day. And we should all thank God for the great minds that study different days and ways of life—so that we can make sense of them today. Here’s some of what they’ve taught me:

Back then...food was quite scarce, not like today! It made sense to put up a little, save for tomorrow. John said to give away to the one who is without! (WHY is he without?! Did he ET all his food already?! Doesn’t matter! Says the Baptizer! Don’t save your measly portion for tomorrow. For it is just about certain that there will be no tomorrow!)

Clothes too! Back then...clothes were NOT as they are mostly today: throwaways. They were expensive and thick and tough. So when Malachi speaks of a ‘fuller’ and his ‘soap’—

There WAS no ‘soap’ Back then...Instead, as I’ve learned from my old Roman friends, laundering those tough garments back then was a matter of stomping on and crushing with weights, the feet of slaves; and the CLEANING product was some strange substance—I still have to sort this out—but evidently one of the most common cleansers Back then...and the reason such launderers were located OUTSIDE city walls—animals AND people produce this stuff. It’s call ‘YOO-RYNE?...’ The chemists among us can clear this up for us.

But if you HAD two tunics—number TWO was for wearing while number ONE was being stomped and YOU-RYNED and rinsed and rinsed and rinsed in a stream. You need number TWO, until number ONE comes back tomorrow or the next day.

But the next man WITHOUT a tunic at all is a perfect fit for our wrappers saved up for cleaning day! And the nickels and dimes we extort and vacuum up and hoard—for ‘THAT DAY’ to come! FORGET about the day AFTER tomorrow! Never count on TOMORROW at all!

PraisetheLord! Hallelujah! God is ready to meet us—so we may be bold to meet Him! Pray! Ask! Seek! Knock! For the minors: calories, costumes, cash. And for the majors: Faith, hope, love!

All this side-stuff and distractions—food, clothes, bags of pennies—the poor Baptizer LOWERED himself to speak of such things BECAUSE these are the things to which WE...LOWER...OURSELVES, bow down, idolize. And then, in the sliver of a chance that he has distracted our FOCUS from the things we IDOLIZE—‘THESE THINGS will secure my day to come!...’

There is some hope that true terror will strike us—NOT over the THINGS we’re panicked to lose, to give away without a thought to our future—

And the true terror will grab us: that our hearts would be settled and centered on any THING AT ALL! Instead of the One Who has more than enough THINGS in his shed, to supply us when we are truly in need.

‘Return to ME, and I will return to Y’ALL!’

Nothing scarier!

Except for the promise—that somehow what cannot BE cleansed is counted clean by heaven! That though all the gold and silver bars our ‘betters’ have locked up somewhere NEVER say ‘100% pure.’ It’s always some .999999%, ALMOST there!

HIS pledge is for purity and cleansing, holiness, to draw near to Him! THAT is HIS clothing! For us!

²⁸ Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. ³⁰ And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.¹

He accomplished it—and the spokesmen of the Law are satisfied; and we have nothing to fear from heaven any more!

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 9:28–31). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Buoyed by my Baptism this week, I scorned fear and made an appointment and went to the Doctor. And he called me to some repentance—and then ordered me back this week too! And he’s going to do the worst! Not just all the poking and prodding stuff. But my nightmare: ‘Please step on this scale, Reverend!’

Daughter Rachel is just about to be a Physician’s Assistant. I texted her my worries: ‘He’s going to use the word “morbidly” next Wednesday!’

Trying in a strange way to be my favorite daughter, Nearly P.A. texted back: ‘Maybe not! He could say “grossly” instead!’

Really looking forward to Wednesday. Pray for me.

Oh, I am! It is somewhat settled inside me that my doctor means me well. I’m ready for that day—kind-of.

As you and I are ready for the return of Christ the Lord! For certain!

For HE has washed us pure—with so little water; not even a SPRITZ! Much less a ‘Back then...’ fuller’s laundering!

Ohhh....! It’s a cleansing heaven COUNTS done to us! GOD accounts us clean, in a way provided neither by man nor by beast! Like the man approved of on the Mount that day—and sent outside the city, to Mount Calvary, to cleanse the world; to make That Day bearable.

‘Who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears?’

Those HE raises up; those for whom HE endured the cross and grave.

So, my dear ones: step on the scale! With your fears; AND with joyful confidence!

Fill the valleys! What you know you SHOULD be doing—don't despair! Start doing today—as if that's all that's left; all we need worry over! In the confidence that you are laundered and clean as Jesus Himself, His Spirit, His Baptism.

Level the mountains! What you know you SHOULD NOT be doing—do not despair! FIRST, eat the Bread that IS His Body; drink the wine that IS His Blood! And then, 100% and MORE pure—HE says!!!...

GIVE away your horde—to those who need; to those who have wasted; to those you like; to those who do not deserve...

And—I must add this! If your spirit concludes that the geography of your relationship with God is smooth as ice—read John and Malachi and Philippians again today. Or ask those in your orbit about your blind spots.

Step...on...the..scale! For when your King appears—sooner than you and I expect!—He will NOT order us to step on a scale! Or justify ourselves, or explain each remaining spot or stain. Instead, That Day is Laundry Day! The Day He is with us without end—and so, we will be forever and for good clean and pure, stain and terror free!

We will be with our pure God, pure as HE IS in the Name of Jesus!
Amen.