

The Stories of Easter

John the Baptist

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Mark 1:1-11

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How many of you have ever heard of the term prepper? Heard of the term prepper? Maybe know what it is, okay who believes that a catastrophic disaster or an emergency is likely to occur in the future. And so they make active typically by stockpiling food and ammunitions and other supplies. And people that are preppers can either be a p reasons or sometimes it's just for survival.

They just say, "You know what? I want to survive if something happens." Many people believe that the current id began in the 1950s or the 1960s with the idea of the Cold War and the recession. And so people were preparing f disaster, nuclear fallout. But the term prepper really became popular in the early 2000s. And in 2010, the preppe

And they started with this active push that they wanted to be viewed as normal people who live normal lives and pending disasters, but they just wanted to prepare just in case. You may not know it, but we have quite a few pre Missionary Church. Now, I am not one of them, but if something crazy happens, I certainly know whose house is i going to share that information with you because there wouldn't be enough for all of us.

So I know where to go if something happens. My mother-in-law, I like to call her a semi-prepper. It's not a term I over there for the holidays, and sometimes she'll say, "Hey, Joel, can you go down into the basement, into that o some cups or some whatever else?" And I just laugh and joke with her about the supermarket that she has in her stuff that's down there. But the idea of prepping really didn't begin in the United States in the 1950s or 1960s.

This idea of preparing has been around for thousands of years. In fact, we just heard from John the Baptist, and h the way for the Lord. He was preparing for the coming of the Messiah. And in truth, you and I are also called to p well. Of course, you and I don't have the privilege of baptizing Jesus in the Jordan.

We don't have the privilege of starting the ministry of Jesus kind of beginning that public ministry when Jesus wo would give up on his career of carpenter and mason work and he would go into full-time ministry. Some people b believe that he would have been 31 years old about this time when he would have been baptized by John. But w others in a different way.

As we move closer to the Easter season, we're going to begin a series that we're calling I believe. And in this serie looking at individuals that God has used, normal people, to play a huge role in the story of Jesus leading up to his resurrection. And so this first week, we want to take some time looking at John. Who was he? Where did he com

What role did he play in preparing people for the coming of the Messiah? What role did he play in bringing forth in the flesh being crucified and coming back to life? The next two weeks, Josh and Levi are going to share with yo come back on Easter. And I look forward to sharing with you some of the evidences we have for the empty tomb.

You see, many people say, "Well, you have faith that that happened, but I think it's just a scam. It's just a lie that' thousands of years. And I hope that you will be amazed at how much evidence that even those that would claim i is hard to argue with some of the proofs of who Jesus was in the empty tomb. But as we talk about John today, I your Bibles with me to Mark, the Gospel of Mark. Again, we're in the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Johr

It's about two-thirds of the way in your Bible. Mark, chapter 1, verse 1. We're just going to read a few verses. Of the four gospels do share about John the Baptist, and we'll just spend some time in Mark today. Mark, chapter 1, verse 1. Father, we do gather before You. We thank You for Your goodness and for Your blessings in our lives.

Thank You for the best story that was ever told, and that we have that in the Scriptures, the good news of Jesus Christ is not just a story. It is history. It is the truth. And so I pray that our hearts and our minds would be open to hear from someone here that are still wrestling with that. Wrestling with, is it the truth? Do I believe it? My prayer is that their

Their spiritual eyes would be opened to hear from you. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen. So Mark's going to share the story, and he begins like this. The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet, I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way. A voice of one calling in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord.

Make straight paths for him. And so, Mark tells us, John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of forgiveness of sins. Mark has sought out with the goal of sharing the good news. We call it the gospel, the good news, so what is this story? Where is he going to begin? What is the timeline? Where did it all start? How do we make sense of it?

Mark decides that the best place to start by sharing this story is with the prophet Isaiah, who received a prophetic message earlier, seven centuries earlier, the prophet Isaiah would write something down that as Mark watches this playing out, he thinks, "I just saw that fulfilled," that prophecy from 700 years ago.

The message states that God is going to send a messenger ahead of the Messiah who will prepare the way. And the Messiah is here. Mark, as we read in Mark chapter 1, clearly sees John the Baptist as fulfilling that prophecy. Now put yourself in the shoes of a Jewish person living in the first century there.

And for the last 700 years, you have been waiting for some of these prophecies to be fulfilled. You have been waiting. You've been told you about Isaiah, your grandparents, your great-grandparents, your great-great-grandparents have been waiting. The Messiah is going to come, but before he does, God is going to send somebody else who is going to prepare the way.

And Mark makes his first bold claim in his gospel, that claim being that John was the one who was prophesied about going to fulfill this prophecy. It's amazing. Generations have come, generations have gone with no progress. Seen and the Jewish people, the Israelites, keep crying out to God, "When are you going to send this deliverer?" And it changes.

This is an interesting side note. As you study Scripture and as you study the history of mankind according to the Bible, it is that as we look at history, often there are hundreds of years where it seems like God is doing nothing. Sometimes it seems like God is doing nothing. You go from this point to all of a sudden the next few verses where 100 years later, it seems like God is doing something.

But as soon as we see movement, things happen pretty fast. As soon as we see God step in, things begin to happen. It happens with you and other individuals, I think most of us desire. We long to be around during one of those seasons of movement. Now, of course, we don't have a choice. God will choose to do whatever He does, but let me just give you a couple of examples.

If we do find ourselves in a season in one of those moments where God truly begins to move, it is going to be thrilling. At the same time. I know some of you are excited about it and you think, "Man, that would be awesome. I can't wait." That excitement would probably immediately be followed by being terrified because it's crazy when you watch God move.

Mark goes on in verse 5, "The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to John the Baptist and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. I love that in the series The Chosen, they referred to John as Crazy John, right? Crazy John.

But the neat thing about John is he didn't care what people thought about him. He didn't care what their perception was of him. He was preparing the way for the Messiah. Which leads us to another truth. When you are doing God's work, you don't care what other people think. When you're doing God's work and you know that you are in the center of His will, you are obedient to what He has asked you to do, you don't care what others think.

John was on a mission, and he was going to do whatever it took to fulfill that mission. And when you are doing th no longer concerned about what others think, you don't stick to the status quo. When God begins to move, there us to the next truth, that when God moves, the status quo gets thrown out the window. When God moves, the st the window.

Now, I'm not sure that I would be excited about going to the extremes of John the Baptist who you know had can with a leather belt and lived on a diet of locust and wild honey. But I guess whatever it takes. Think about John th what others thought of him and how they viewed him. I'm not sure if you go back and read the story in Luke chap John's father. I'm not sure.

Was Zechariah proud that his son would now be known as this crazy man in the desert that was baptizing people maybe he wanted him to be a lawyer or a doctor. Think about being John. Maybe you're letting people down, but fulfilling what God had called him to do. Verse 7, "And this was John's message, "After me comes the one more p of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." John knew from the very beginning that his the way for the Lord. The spotlight was not to be on him. The spotlight was to be on this one who was going to cc spotlight on someone that would be far greater than himself, but he didn't know who it was. He didn't know who be.

John was never under the impression that he was going to be more important than the Messiah. No, John was a j prepare the way for the arrival of Jesus. So as we look at Scripture, John was preparing people for the Lord's first reading through this story, it was like a light bulb went on in my head. Although John was preparing people for th you and I are to prepare people for his second arrival.

We have the same job, the same responsibility that John had. We are to prepare people for the coming of the Me like that day is never going to come. There may be generations that come and generations that go. It's been 2,000 grandparents, great-grandparents have been sharing with us about the second coming of our Messiah. And some never going to happen because if it was going to happen, it should have happened already.

But our job remains. God tells us to be faithful, to prepare the way, to prepare others for the coming of our Mess 9. "At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as Jesus w water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

And a voice came from heaven saying, 'You are my son whom I love. With you, I am well pleased.'" John's baptism beginning of Jesus' public ministry. This again would be that time where he would set aside his career and he wo called him to do.

John recognizes Jesus as the Messiah, the one that he is preparing the way for because he had been told, "The m Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit." So John had been given this message fr imagine that every baptism from that point forward, when John was praying, he had one eye closed and one eye Wondering, is this the person? Nope. Is this the person?

Nope. And then Jesus shows up. Can you imagine the shock when John finds out it's his relative? It's Jesus. He is t moment that he recognizes that it is Jesus He is not afraid to proclaim, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away tl proclaims that immediately.

He would go on to say, "I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God." As we approach Easter and as we loc the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I ask you the question and I ask myself the question, "Are you willing to proclaim that this is the Son of God." Are we willing to proclaim that with our lives?

Are we willing to proclaim that with our mouths, knowing that there will be people around us who may think tha proclaim that, some people may receive that news with joy and with gladness, but there will be others, maybe fa maybe coworkers that just think we're crazy. What do you mean Jesus is the Messiah? He's going to come back. I What do you mean there's a God?

Have you looked at the world around us and all the crazy things that are going on? Why would you believe in that that have opinions about you and perceptions about you. But will you move forward saying, "I have seen and I believe Jesus is the Son of God." As I told you earlier, the story of John in preparing the way for the Messiah is shared in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The one that I would encourage you this afternoon, if you have some time and you want to know a little more his encourage you to look up Luke chapter 1. And there, Luke shares with us the whole story, going all the way back to when he would go into the temple as the priest getting ready to offer a sacrifice. There he meets an angel of God who tells him he's going to be pregnant and he doesn't believe. And so that's why his mouth is shut and he could not speak until John is born.

His first words after going into the temple would be, "His name is John." Naming John the Baptist. It'll give you the background of his family, the relationship between Jesus and John. And so we asked the question today, "What are you doing to prepare the way for Jesus? What is God calling you to do? Is He calling you to step out on a limb of faith where you know that God has put it in front of something, but you know that people are going to think you're weird.

They're going to think you're crazy if you do that. You're going to be like crazy John. And so for your own reasons said, I don't want to be Crazy John or Crazy Joel or crazy whatever. I don't want that to be the perception that people have of you just going to kind of stuff this down a little bit. Yes, I believe, but I'm not going to go out on a limb and do what God is calling me to do. What are you doing to prepare the way for Jesus? Are you proclaiming Jesus as Lord?

Do people around you know what your confession of faith is? Maybe for some of you, you need to make your profession of faith. Put your faith in Jesus Christ. Are you ready? What if, truly, what if we are the generation when Jesus returns? What time? Are you prepared for that? Again, I know it's exciting for some to think, "Yeah, we might be in that generation."

But when it starts, things are going to happen fast. And I promise, it won't be easy." You've read in the book of Revelation to take that literally or not, it seems like a crazy time to me, right? That might be exciting at first, but it's going to be a time of trial. Many of us think that maybe we live in that generation, but one of the prophecies of Scripture that needs to be fulfilled before His return is that everybody needs to hear the name of Jesus.

So what are you doing to prepare the way for His return? Are you sharing the name of Jesus? My prayer is that we would find us being faithful. He would find us being obedient to the calls that He has put upon our life because God is calling people to do supernatural things, to prepare the way.

Not a single one of us is worthy to prepare the way for the Messiah and for His Second Coming, and yet He may be calling us to do an exact thing. May we not lose focus of the purpose that God has for us. As we get ready to celebrate this Easter season, let's be more excited about Easter. Our entire faith hinges on the resurrection of Jesus.

And I know I jokingly say it every year for the last few years now, but if there was a guy who predicted how he was going to come back to life and he actually pulled it off, I'm going to follow that guy, right? I'm going to believe what he says. To believe his truth. So if Jesus truly was raised from the dead, it changes everything for me. It changes everything about how I live.

What he calls me to do must be true. What he says is best for me must be best for me because I don't know anything about their death and resurrection and pulled it off. And so as we get ready to celebrate Easter, may we truly celebrate and proclaim the truth of who Jesus is and what He has called us to be. As always, the altars are open if you want to come to the altars because of who Jesus is. If you want to come because God has put a call upon your life.

And up to this point, for whatever reason, you've just pushed it off, you can come to the altars, do your business, and let God judge you. No one's going to bother you. If you want prayer for something, or if you need more insight, or you want to do something, but I just don't know what it is, and you want to talk with somebody, there'll be people on the altars with you. They may not be able to answer your questions. That's okay. But they certainly will intercede and pray for you and encourage you to do that. Let's close in prayer.

And heavenly Father, we don't have a crystal ball. We can't see into the future. We don't even know what the next steps are in our lives. But we serve the One who does. And so, Father, would we be found faithful? Would we be obedient to the calls that have put upon our lives?

Would we be willing to proclaim you with our lives and with our voices as we prepare the way for your return? Ai
forward to that. Do a work in our hearts and in our lives. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.