

The Great Commandment 2: John The Baptist

Introduction

Last week we got to hear Jesus' creed. He amended the Shema. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. All of life hangs on these two commandments. In both cases, loving God and loving others requires relationship. It's nonnegotiable. The currency of any relationship is trust. How much you trust someone defines how far or deep the relationship can go. If that's correct, then being a truth teller, someone who's honest with God, others and themselves is a key part to following Jesus. It's also the key to freedom and brand new beginnings.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever had a chance to get a fresh start? You started a tending a new school without the bad reputation you had at the last one. You got to started a new career, determined not to make the same mistakes as the last time. You're in a new relationship, and the weight of past misdeeds is gone? What was that experience like? Tell your story. How did you use this opportunity?
2. Confessing is telling the truth about ourselves too God and are church. We tend to have three faces. A face we wear in public, one we wear with our family and one that only we see. God wants you tell him the truth about all three faces. How do you feel about the idea of confessing? What is God's response to our confessions?
3. Read Luke 3:1-9. The role of a prophet was to rub truth in your face. They confront, even antagonize. God uses his prophets as a wake up call to people. Have you ever been confronted with a harsh truth about yourself? How did you react? Why is John talking about the Jewish ethnicity? Can other people's faith save us?
4. Read Luke 3:10-18. What other areas of life does John tell the crowd they need to get real with and tell God the truth. In what are of your life do you find yourself hiding from God? Read the Lord's prayer again. How does this relate to the great commandment? What's stopping you from confessing and having a new beginning?

Changing Your Mind

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them. (Lk 3:15-18).