



The Sermon

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Luke 3:1-6

"A Baptism of Repentance"

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TRANSCRIPT

Well, we have a wonderful passage that we're going to be looking at. And if you're visiting, you just need to know, we preach verse by verse through books in the Bible, and we are going through the gospel of Luke, and we started in chapter 1, verse 1, and today we now come to Luke chapter 3. So, if you would take your Bible and turn to Luke chapter 3, we're going to be looking at the first six verses today. The title of this message is "A Baptism of Repentance," and I think you'll see why I have called it this. I want to begin reading in verse 1, as Luke continues to unfold this story of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Beginning in verse 1 - you know what? I just opened to John 3: "Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; and he came to Jesus by night: 'Master, no man can do the sign that You do unless God is with him.' 'Truly, truly, I say to you, except you be born again, you will not see the kingdom of heaven.'" Anyway, I'd love to preach that. But... Wow, I don't think I've ever done that.

Okay, Luke chapter 3, beginning in verse 1: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene," - not the one in west Texas. Verse 2 - "in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of the Lord came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the

wilderness. And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching 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, "Make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every ravine shall be filled, and every mountain and hill will be brought low; the crooked will become straight, and the rough roads smooth; and all flesh will see the salvation of God.'"" This is the reading of God's word. Glory to His name for these truths. Let us go to Him in prayer.

[Prayer ] Our Father in heaven, we are so grateful to have Your word preserved for us. It's come down to us 2,000 years after this was written and it speaks to us as though it had been written five minutes ago. I pray that You would prepare our hearts to receive the truth of this passage. Would You bless my brothers and sisters in Christ here today as we look carefully into this text? We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

In these verses that I have just read, we fast-forward almost 20 years from the last text that we looked at at the end of Luke chapter 2. We now fast-forward from the childhood of Christ to what will be the inauguration of His public ministry, as Jesus will step out of the shadows of obscurity and into the spotlight of public view. But before Jesus will launch now His itinerate preaching ministry, John the Baptist must assume his place as the forerunner to precede the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. John must preach to prepare the hearts of people to receive their King, the Lord Jesus. And as John preaches, he preaches the message of repentance, that repentance is absolutely necessary for the forgiveness of sins. If there is no repentance, there is no forgiveness of sins. And as Luke writes this, this is where Luke chooses to draw our focus to this message of repentance.

Now, just so that you will know, the three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), they all focus upon repentance; not faith, but repentance. When we come to the gospel of John, it shifts from repentance to faith. When we come to the book of Acts, the focus is on repentance, not faith. When we come to the Epistles, it shifts from repentance to faith. But when we come to the book of Revelation, it comes back to repentance.

What do we learn from this? That all true, saving faith has repentance, and all true repentance has saving faith. We enter the kingdom of God with a repentant faith, a faith that is marked by repentance. Repentance and faith are the heads and tails of the same coin. Wherever you find the one, you will find the other. They are like Siamese twins joined at the hip. They can never be separated, though they have their own unique focus.

This message of repentance is not a new message. It was proclaimed throughout the Old Testament by the prophets. Isaiah, in chapter 55:7, that great evangelistic chapter in which he calls sinners to enter the kingdom of God. In Isaiah 55:7 we read, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous forsake take his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." In order to have the Lord's pardon, there must be a forsaking of wicked ways and a returning to the Lord.

This would be the very same message that would be preached by the Lord Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry. In fact, He began His public preaching ministry in [Mark 1:16](#) with these very words, "Repent and believe in the gospel." Jesus understood that repentance and faith are welded together. And in Matthew 4:17, Jesus said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In other words, if you are to enter into the kingdom, you must repent.

In Luke 5:32, Jesus said, "I have come to call sinners to repentance." Sinners outside the kingdom must repent in order to enter into the kingdom, it is this important. And in Luke 13:3, Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you will likewise perish." The only way to escape eternal punishment is to repent. And in Luke 15:10, Jesus said, "There is joy in heaven in the presence of the angels over just one sinner that repents."

When Jesus commissioned His disciples, He sent them out in the Great Commission, in Luke 24, to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus charged them, "Preach repentance." And when we read the book of Acts and we walk through the apostolic sermons, that is the dominant note

that we read. On the day of Pentecost when they interrupted Peter's sermon, they said, "What must we do?" Peter said, "Repent." In the next chapter, Acts 3:19, "Repent and return." And when Paul went to Athens to Mars Hill, he said, "All people everywhere should repent." There's not a person on planet earth who is not summoned and called by God to repent in order to enter the kingdom of God.

In Acts 20:21, Paul told the elders at Ephesus, "I solemnly testified of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Did you hear that? "Repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." They are inseparably bound together. And the reason for this emphasis is that it protects from an easy believism. Just to have acknowledgment in your head of certain facts about Christ and the gospel that have never really percolated down into your heart and affected your life, it is this message of repentance that guarantees that saving faith is real and genuine. And so, this is the message that John the Baptist came to preach. He preached repentance for the forgiveness of sins and repentance for salvation.

So, I want us to walk through this passage. This is critically important that we grasp this today, and that it is real in our lives. In order for you to have the forgiveness of your sins, you must repent. And in order for you to have salvation, you must repent. So as we walk through this passage, I have three simple headings to set before you: the preacher of repentance, the preaching of repentance, and the picture of repentance. So let's begin with "the preacher of repentance." That is in the first two verses.

Luke begins, really, by setting the scene historically for us. And he is such an accurate historian, which the accuracy of his history, really, helps bolster our confidence and belief in the accuracy of his theology and of his doctrine. And the only thing that we really need to know – I don't want to get bogged down in all of these five Roman rulers – the only thing you really need to know is that the beginning of verse 1, "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar." That's probably the year AD 29, it could be, give or take, one year. But most would isolated at AD 29, and this is important because it helps us place a year and a date on the cross when Jesus will die upon the cross. Tiberius Caesar was the emperor of the

Roman Empire. He began as a co- Caesar with Caesar Augustus. And by this point, he is now the sole emperor over the Roman Empire.

And we come to the end of verse 2 because I really want to get to the meat of this – and we're taking the Lord's Supper at the end of this message. We read, "the word of God came to John." That's a familiar statement that is found throughout the Old Testament. When God called a prophet to preach the message that God would give to him, it's a familiar expression, "the word of the Lord came" to Samuel or Nathan or Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Jonah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi, and this signifies John as a prophet who would be receiving direct revelation from God.

And what is so amazing about this is that it has been 460 years since there has been a word from God. Israel had rejected her prophets. She had persecuted her prophets, she had martyred her prophets, and it came to the point where God said, "I will send you no more prophets. I have nothing else to say." And it is the ultimate judgment of God when God stops speaking. It has been almost five centuries since there has been a word from God; and now, suddenly, after all of these decades and centuries of silence from God, we now read, "the word of God came to John," John, the son of Zacharias. Zacharias, as we saw in Luke chapter 1, was a priest who was serving in the temple. And John now will be the messenger of God. He will be the mouthpiece for God to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we see at the end of verse 2 that John is in the wilderness. The word "wilderness" simply means a solitary place; a desolate, deserted, lonely place. He is in a godforsaken wasteland out by the Dead Sea in an area that goes a little bit also to the north. It's like the Sahara Desert. It's like Death Valley. It's where nothing grows. It's where hardly anyone lives. And this is where John grew up.

John, more than likely, is an orphan at this point and earlier. His parents were very advanced in age when they had him, and they probably have now passed away given a normal life expectancy, and John is alone in the

wilderness. He is away from the religious establishment. He is away from the spiritual leaders of Israel. He is separated off to himself in an uninhabited place out of the public eye, away from the beaten path. John is all alone. And this is how God typically likes to work so often. God so often bypasses the religious establishment of the day that has grown cold, and even apostate, and God delights to go to the place, the most unlikely place, to raise up His next voice.

It's exactly what happened in the Reformation. In the Reformation, God bypassed Rome, God bypassed the Vatican, God bypassed the pope, God bypassed the cardinals. God just looked the other way into a little town in Germany called Wittenberg. It's a tiny little town. And there was a Bible Professor named Martin Luther. And the word of the Lord came to Martin Luther in the sense of rediscovering in the written word of God what is the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

That didn't come from Rome. That didn't come from the pomp and the circumstance of all of the gilded towers of Rome. No, God chose to raise up a voice in a little town of Wittenberg. That's what happened in the Puritan Age in the Puritan Age, there was the King of England who was the head over the Church of England. He was the defender of the faith, and he had gone apostate. He didn't know the gospel. He didn't know the Lord. And there came a time when the Puritans were put out of their pulpits, 2,000 Puritan preachers put out of their pulpit in one day - August 24, 1662, the Great Ejection. And then, Charles II, the King of England, he passed legislation that no Puritan could ever come within five miles of a city, that no Puritan could hold public office, that no Puritan could even be buried within the city limits.

Matthew Henry, the great commentator, spent most of his life preaching in a barn out in a field. And, yet, that's where God chose to raise up John Bunyan who wrote *Pilgrims Progress*, and Samuel Rutherford in Scotland and the rest. That's how God likes to operate. And that's what happened in the Great Awakening. The very foundation, the moral foundation of our

country was laid as the result of the preaching of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield.

Well, Whitefield was barred from preaching in churches because he had the audacity to say that the pastors need to be born again, that so many of them are the blind leaders of the blind. And so church doors were closed to Whitefield, the greatest evangelist who ever lived since the apostle Paul, And Whitefield had to turn to the open fields and preach out in the country because there was no church that would receive him into its walls. And it was there that God lit the flame of the Great Awakening that electrified the colonies before the birth of our country.

No, I'm not surprised to see the word "wilderness" in verse 2. I'm not surprised to see the word of God came to John as he was in the middle of nowhere. God likes to do it this way. He likes to take the most unlikely messenger found in the most unlikely place and then raise him up to be His mouthpiece. That is exactly what we see here.

And so, as John comes preaching, I want you to note, second, not just the preacher of repentance, but I want you to note "the preaching of repentance." That's in verse 3. We read in verse 3, "And he" - John - "came into all the district around the Jordan." What that means is John is not stationary, John is, really, like an itinerate evangelist and he's moving around this barren wasteland, preaching near the Jordan River, and he will be baptizing people in the Jordan River. And really what's happening is that the people will have to come out to John just like they did with Whitefield.

And so, "he came into all the district around Jordan." I mean, that's out by the Dead Sea, and then up north from there. It just looks like the surface of the moon almost, it's Nowheresville on steroids. And as he came, he came preaching, preaching. Preaching has always been the primary means of grace, the primary means by which the saving and sanctifying grace of God has flowed from the throne of grace into the hearts and lives of people, as a man of God will open his mouth and preach the word of God. Christianity is distinctly a preaching religion.

This word 'preaching' literally means to lift up the voice. John's not out in the wilderness sharing. He's not sitting on a stool and gabbing and sharing little thoughts that have popped into his mind that morning. No, he's preaching, he's heralding the word of God. He's proclaiming the truth. He's calling out to the people who are coming. He is summoning their response. That's what John is. He's manly, he's not tripping over his skirt to get to the pulpit. He's a man's man, "and he was preaching" - notice it says - "a baptism of repentance."

Baptism to this point, only a Gentile would be baptized as a proselyte to enter into the commonwealth of Israel. A Gentile who's an outsider, if he wants to become an insider, he would have to be baptized. And for John to be preaching to Jewish people that they need to be baptized, they caught the drift. The message was clear: "You may have been born in the nation of Israel, but you're an outsider to God until you repent. You're on the outside looking in. You have your citizenship in Israel, but you have no citizenship in heaven."

And so this call for baptism of Jewish people, this was an affront to them. No one has ever confronted them with this. And John is preaching a baptism of repentance. That is to say that there first must be repentance; and then to make it known publicly, you are to be baptized. Baptism is an outward sign of the inward reality of repentance, which leads to the forgiveness of sin. So this baptism here signified that they had already repented. This baptism symbolized their repentance. It was a public testimony to what was on the inside of their heart, that they have repented. The order is very important. First, you repent, and then you're baptized.

So, what does it mean to repent? What does this mean? Well, it's a Greek word that means a change of mind. It's a change of mind that is so radical that it includes a change of affections and a change of will. It involves the change of the entire person - mind, heart, and will. It involves a decisive turning away from sin, a 180, a total pivot, a turning away from sin and a turning to God through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance involves



the repudiation of your old way of life, of your old lifestyle of sin, and a turning to God to now pursue on a new path a new life.

All true repentances, I already have said, is accompanied with saving faith. There's a sense in which repentance is the turning, and faith is the embracing. Faith without repentance is merely adding Jesus to your life but never turning away from sin. And repentance without faith is merely a turning but never embracing the Lord Jesus Christ. So both are absolutely necessary and it's what Jesus came preaching in Mark 1:16, "Repent and believe. Repent and believe the gospel."

So, repentance and faith are the heads and tails of the same coin. Wherever you find the one, you will find the other. It is a repentant faith or a believing repentance. And as I've already said, it depends upon which book in the New Testament, which section you are reading, to see which will be stressed and which will be emphasized. It's not either/or, it's both/ and. When you read Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the emphasis is not on faith, it's upon repentance. But when you turn the page and come to the gospel of John, the emphasis is not on repentance, it's on faith. But then you turn the page and you come to the book of Act and the emphasis is on repentance. But then you read the 21 Epistles of the New Testament, and over and above, the primary emphasis is upon faith: "By grace you've been saved through faith; that not of yourselves." But then you come to the book of Revelation, Jesus said to five of the seven churches, "Repent and return."

So what John is preaching here is a vitally important message. And so to help us dial in on this and sharpen our focus on what is repentance, I want to give you four words that start with the letter C that will help almost serve as a frame around the picture of repentance. These are like four legs on a table that hold up true repentance.

And so, the first word is "conviction." With true repentance there, is conviction of sin. In John 16:8, Jesus said, "The spirit will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." Now, that word "convict" means to prosecute, like a prosecuting attorney in a court of law

would bring charges against the defendant. And so, the Holy Spirit's ministry, among other ministries in this world, is to be the chief prosecutor of heaven, to bring indictment to our hearts that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

And added to the prosecution is the word "persuasion," as he brings it home and persuades you that you have sinned and that you have fallen short of the glory of God. That's where repentance begins with the knowledge of sin and an ownership and an acknowledgment.

And then second word is "contrition," contrition over sin, that there would be a sorrow over sin, not just the knowledge of it in the head, but a broken heart over one sin. That's why Jesus begins the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3. First He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Then He says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." There has to be mourning over one's poverty of spirit. In 2 Corinthians 7:9-10, Paul writes, "You were made sorrowful to the point of repentance, leading to salvation."

So, all true repentance there is the knowledge of one's sin, and then there is the sorrow and the mourning with a broken heart over that sin. And then, third, "confession." There has to be the confession of that sin to God. And the word "confession," *homologeō*, means to say the same as. In other words, that we would agree with God about our sin, that we acknowledge what God says about our sin and we are in perfect agreement with God. In 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We have to acknowledge that we have sinned.

And then, fourth, is the word "change." True repentance brings about a change of life direction, a change of life purpose, a change of life priorities, a change of mindset and affection whereby we turn away from living a life of sin and now turning to God to follow Christ down the narrow path that leads to life. This is what repentance is. And no one enters the kingdom of God without repenting of their sin.

At the end of verse 3 we see "the result of this repentance." It's good. It's painful to repent, but it's pleasurable to reap the fruit of repentance. And you'll note the last five words: "for the forgiveness of sins." You see, repentance precedes the forgiveness of sin. Repentance produces and leads to the forgiveness of sin. We must let go of our sin if God is to let go of our sin.

The word "forgiveness" literally means to send away. It's a dismissal, "Out of my sight, away from here." It is a release. Forgiveness is God sending our sin away. Now, we continue to sin as Christians, though we will sin less. We don't become sinless, but we will sin less by practice. But it is the sending away of the penalty of sin that was once upon us. It is a sending away of the guilt of sin and the condemnation that once hovered over us. God just entirely dismisses it and it is no longer haunting us or hovering over us. "If the Son shall set you free, you shall be free in indeed." And so it is repentance that leads to forgiveness of sins.

"Sins" is in the plural, and it indicates all of our sins - past sins, present sins, future sins, big sins, small sins, mental sins, verbal sins, action sins, reaction sins, sins of omission, sins of commission. From A to Z, from alpha to omega, the entire record of our sins is sent away. This is the heart of the gospel. It's the forgiveness of sins.

I have many sins for which I need to be forgiven. I would be embarrassed for you to know all the sins for which I need forgiveness. You would be embarrassed if anyone else in this room knew all of your sins that need to be forgiven. But when we repent and turn away from a life pursuit of sin indicating we are serious about being right with God and we turn to God and embrace His offer of the gospel, all of our sins are sent away. But it underscores the necessity of repentance.

And so I want to ask you this question. As you look back at the time that you were converted, what comes into your mind wherever it was that you found yourself in the time of your conversion, did you repent? Were you

convicted of your sins? Were you broken over your sins? Did you confess your sins? Did you make a decisive turning away from those sins?

No one enters through the narrow gate without repenting. And in many ways it's the missing mark in the church today. I believe that churches are flooded with people who attend worship services who have never repented in their life and they're living with a false assurance of a salvation that they do not possess, that they have simply walked an aisle, parroted a prayer, repeated a prayer, but there's never been the foundations of their heart broken up and a repenting over their sin.

We all come through the narrow gate crippled, crushed. None of us giggle into the kingdom of heaven. The message that John the Baptist came preaching was and is and shall always be till the return of Christ an absolutely fundamentally important message, because unless you repent, you will likewise perish. Unless you repent, you will die in your sins. Have you repented of your sins, not just checked a box, "Oh, yeah, I agree. I agree with this. I believe this. I agree. I'm good to go," as it come crashing home in the depth of your soul.

John preached this to the most religious group of people on the face of the earth. They must have been in shock that John actually told them that they needed to repent, and following that, that they needed to be baptized. "I need to be baptized?" "Yes, after you repent."

So we need a picture of this. So we come to verse 4, and the third main heading is "the picture of repentance." Luke adds this. These do not come from the mouth of John the Baptist, these words actually come from the mouth of Isaiah the prophet that Luke, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, it flashes into his mind by the Spirit's working, "Oh, yes, Isaiah 40, verses 3 and 5. That has to be inserted right here so that everyone understands what it looks like to repent because of the great importance of what is being said.

So in verse 4, Luke writes this. Again, this isn't John the Baptist, this is Luke writing this from Isaiah. So, verse 4, "As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet." It speaks to how well Luke knew the word of God also, and how he could connect so many different passages of scripture together to form one body of truth. He is a master teacher and a skilled theologian as he is writing the gospel of Luke that bears his name.

And so he quotes Isaiah 40:3-5, as I've already said. Now, notice what he says. What Isaiah said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness." That sound familiar? "Wilderness" was used in verse 2, here it is now in verse 4. Isaiah 40 was prophetic, looking ahead to the coming of the forerunner of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. This finds its fulfillment in John.

And so, "The voice of one crying." Please note, the voice, the preaching, the declaring, the heralding. It's a voice of one crying. This word "crying," as it's used in Luke in chapter 9:38 is translated "shouted." In chapter 18, verse 38, it's translated "called out." In Acts 8 - Luke also wrote the book of Acts - Acts 8:7, "shouting." And in Acts 25:24, "loudly declaring." You want a preacher who lifts up his voice and preaches with conviction and preaches with passion and with a sense of urgency. That's how John is preaching. He is crying.

In fact, I went back to Isaiah 40:3 and I looked up the word "crying" as it was originally written in the Hebrew. It's a Hebrew word *qara* which means to roar, to roar like a lion. That's how John was heralding the message in the wilderness. And here is the essence of his message, these next words, "Make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight."

Now, what does this mean? Well, we need to understand the historical background on this, that whenever an ancient emperor or king would travel from his palace to another city, it would take him through rough terrain, it would take him through a barren wilderness that was unpopulated and uninhabited, and there would be a very rough road that had been trodden down by a few earlier travelers. And so the king, he must come. He must come with dignity and majesty.

And so the king would send out a construction crew, in fact, several construction crews to smooth the road so that the king could make his entrance into the next city. And so as he would send the construction crew out, they would straighten crooked places, they would raise up low places, they would lower high places, they would smooth out rough places, so that the king could make his entrance. And they would also send out ahead of the king and the construction crew, they would send what was known as a forerunner. And the forerunner would be lifting up his voice and saying, "The king is coming! The king is coming!" and the people would come out of their houses and they would line the road that is now being smoothed out and straightened so that people could see the king. And rarely in this day would anyone be able to with their eyes actually be able to see their own king who's always in the palace. "The King is coming! The King is coming! Prepare for the King." And this is the ministry of John the Baptist. He's the forerunner to announce to the nation Israel that "Your Messiah is now here, and the Messiah is coming, and you must prepare to receive your King into your heart."

But here's the problem. It's a huge problem. Your heart is a wilderness. Your heart is rough and jagged and coarse and depressed and arrogant. The king will not come into your heart until you remove these obstacles, until you prepare the way for His coming by repentance.

So as we look at verse 5, we see the reality of what repentance looks like. And in verse 6, we see the result of repentance. Don't miss this. Don't miss this. And so in verse 5, here's the reality of repentance: "Every ravine will be filled." A ravine, literally, a chasm, a low place, a very low place. There's all kinds of wild things living in this low place, animals hiding. It represents low living.

We would say today gutter living. Every ravine must be filled. It must be filled with repentance. It must be filled with God's grace and God's mercy. You can't come just as you are, you've got to fill up every low, depressed place. You've got to turn from your sin.

And then he says, "and every mountain and hill will be brought low." I think you see the picture of this. Every mountain of pride, every mountain of swelling arrogance that has exalted itself above the word of God and has elevated self and exalted self and every haughty spirit has got to be brought low. There there's got to be the humility of repentance. You've got to deny yourself and take up a cross if you're to become a follower of Christ. You've got to lower yourself and submit yourself under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

And then he says, "the crooked will become straight." When there is true repentance, the crooked life will become straight. "Crooked life" here representing crooked living, deviant living.

And then he says, "and the rough roads smooth." Rough roads" here refer to just rough living, coarse language, harsh lifestyle. It's got to be smoothed out by repentance. This is the picture of repentance, and this is what it looks like when a sinner comes to Christ on Christ terms. It's not an easy believism where you just acknowledge a few Bible facts and you're in. No, your heart, your heart must be repentant.

And what's the result? Look at verse 6, here's the result: "and all flesh will see the salvation of God." You see, we're talking about salvation. We're talking about forgiveness of sin. We're not talking about secondary matters, like serving the Lord, happy marriage, all that. That's wonderful and great. We're talking about getting into the kingdom. We're talking about the narrow gate.

He says, "All flesh will see the salvation of God." What does this mean? This does not teach universalism that all flesh will be saved. We know that contradicts the entire rest of the Bible. When he says, "all flesh," He's referring to both Jews and Gentiles, both male and female, both slaves and masters, both Greeks and barbarians. Every different category of people, all flesh. And this indicates there's only one way of salvation and one point of entrance into the kingdom of God. If all flesh are to see the

salvation of God, then it necessitates there must be repentant. All flesh will see, personally see in their own lives, will personally experience the salvation of God. This salvation of God is exactly what you think it means. It means, as in verse 3, forgiveness of sins. It means being clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It means being brought into the family of God. And as I've told you so many times, I hesitate to say it again, but I will. All salvation is from God by God and for God. All salvation is from the wrath of God. It is by the grace of God. It is for the glory of God. And we could even add, "it is in the Son of God." That's what this salvation is.

So of all Sundays for us to be addressing a passage of scripture, it's hard to imagine something more strategically important for your eternal destiny than this passage. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven. But he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say unto Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name? Did we not cast out demons in Your name?' Did we not perform many wondrous works?' And I will say unto them in that day, 'Depart from Me, you who work iniquity. I never knew you.' He who hears these words of Mine and acts upon them is like a very wise man, who built his house upon the rock. The rains came the winds blew and beat against the house; it did not fall because it was built on the rock. He who hears these words of mine and does not act upon them is like a very foolish man who built his house upon the sand. And when the rains came and the winds blew and beat against the house. Great was its fall because it was built upon the sand."

Those who build upon the sand are those who have never repented, they have simply acknowledged the historicity of Jesus Christ. They have acknowledged maybe even the authority of the Bible. They have acknowledged the plan of salvation, and they have seen their need. They just simply added Jesus to their life like life insurance and just kept on going down the same path, and nothing changed.

Where there's true conversion, there is repentance. There is a heart that has been smitten by the Spirit of God and the realization that I'm under the indictment of heaven, and the only hope that I have is Jesus Christ. And like a



drowning man would grab for a rope, so you see that Christ is your only hope; and you are so filled with remorse over your own selfishness having gone your own way, having kept God at arms length, that for the first time in your life, you realize, "I'm a lawbreaker and I'm in dire need of grace."

That's what repentance does, and it brings you to the point where you turn away from your old way of life and you turn to follow Christ on a new path in a new direction with a new mindset. And let me just tell you this. Next week we're going to continue in this same passage, and the next verses talk about the most religious people who came out to hear John, and they did not repent, and they refused to repent, because they thought they were okay with God. So I hope that you'll be here next week as we continue this look at repentance, as John will say to the religious leaders of Israel, "You must bring forth the fruit of repentance. There needs to be a change in your life."

So, I want to ask you, do you see your sin as an offense to God? Do your sins break your own heart? Have you confessed them to God and turned away from them? Have you received forgiveness of sins? Except you repent, you will, likewise, perish.

[Prayer] Father, this is a heavy passage, a weighty passage, that should cause every one of us here today to take inventory: "Have I truly repented? Am I a lifelong repenter? Have I confessed my sin to you?" And so, God, work this passage into our hearts this day, in Christ's name. Amen.