

Marinating in God's Word: Matthew 3:1-12

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news, but not good news you can fully receive without some preparation. Thus, the ministry of John the Baptist, preparing us to hear.

For further reflection on your own or in a small group, consider these questions:

- If the gospel is about Jesus, the gospels give an awful lot of ink to John the Baptist. Look up the various John the Baptist passages in all four gospels, and combining these accounts, describe what John was like. What was at the center of his considerable passion? How did he get Jesus right? Wrong?
- John the Baptist was the first prophetic voice in 400 years, and despite his “hellfire and brimstone” preaching style, he drew great crowds. Why? What was it about his messages that so resonated with people? How could such hellfire and brimstone preaching be part of the “good news” of the gospel?
- Vv. 2 and 6 summarize John's message: he preached repentance, and used baptism as a ritual of cleansing. What is repentance? How is it more than feeling guilty? Given the grace and forgiveness we have in Christ, is repentance even relevant for us? Why?
- John turned up the hellfire heat especially high for the Pharisees and Sadducees – the most religious people in his audience. Why? What are the challenges particular to religious people to be prepared to meet the Lord?

Next week we will focus on Matthew 3:13-17.