

*10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?" 11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise." 12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." 14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."*

We've been studying the ministry of John the baptizer. It's with some purpose that I change the usual name.

Our friends 4 blocks over are Baptists, and that's great. Pam and I were "baptists" for many years. We were never quite comfortable with the "Southern" baptist modifier. If anything, we were non-denominational baptists happy to identify with any group that honored this book and it's authority.

That is the more important thing to both of us. And for years there was a bit of distaste for the largest denomination in America. But then in the 1990's men like Al Mohler and John Piper actually started making me sort of proud to associate with the baptists.

Things are already shifting to the christian left again in that denomination. But all that to say, John the 'Baptist' was not a baptist in the way we use the word these days. John the baptizer is actually more accurate and friendly.

The jews didn't baptize. Only new converts to judaism from outside the nationality were baptized as a show that they were washing themselves of the old world they were leaving in order to become a jewish proselyte. Jews who were born jews didn't get baptized. That was foreign to them.

But John came preaching a radical doctrine. The messiah who was on the horizon, about to appear, would require a repentance and departure from the false religion that had formed in that nation. A departure and separation that looked a lot more like what the proselyte's understood than what the national jews did.

Jesus has come to take back this world from Satan. He is a King who will reign on David's throne after Satan and his wicked world system is abolished. That means a radical change, a heart change from what had become normal in Israel.

All of Judaism had gotten in line to co-exist with the ruler of this world. It was a satanic system. Lots of whitewash so it appeared cleaner and nicer than the nations around them, but it was no closer to God through all of the ritual and washings and good works than any of the surrounding nations were.

Satan can get you into hell by many methods. Sex and drugs and Rock-n-Roll is obvious. But far more people take the religious road to hell. Religion is in fact, an opiate. The religion of works righteousness takes thousands of forms. None of them lead to heaven. You can't work your way there.

The Bible is clear. All of our righteous deeds are like a soiled garment. God only allows clean white garments in His heaven, and every where you see the saints pictured, white and clean, it's because God has removed the sin and replaced it with His righteousness, by faith.

The world is full of religious people working their way to God. None of them are going to get there. None of our righteousness is righteous enough. Jesus cleared that all up when in the sermon on the mount, not a long while after John, on this morning, said *Therefore, you must be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.* That's the standard.

John was separated from the Jewish religious machine. He was a prophet of God, out in the wilderness, out in the desert, separate from the Jewish religious system. A true man of God in a sea of religious men who belonged to the king of this world, the Devil. He was unique.

This morning we'll look at what he taught. Some of the nuts and bolts.

*10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"*

To get this initial question in context, we need to remind ourselves by way of review of what John has already been preaching.

*7 So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 9 "Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

Repentance from sin. A changed lifestyle that shows a changed heart. Stop relying on your nationality, your Jewishness, God could speak a billion Jews into existence from stones if it pleased Him. It doesn't. Repentance from inner sin and heart change is what does please Him.

Nothing has changed. We know more now. We understand the theology of soteriology. How God takes our sin and punishes it fully in His own Son's death on the cross. And how God then gives us a "righteousness" not our own. It's a trade. He puts our sin on Jesus. He puts Jesus' righteousness on us. We become perfect with a perfect righteousness imputed to us by faith in the finished work of Jesus.

But the approach and ultimate requirement is unchanged from what John told these Jews who had come to the Jordan. Your religion is no good. Your nationality is worthless. God is looking for hearts broken over sin. True repentance. And then, fruit, visible fruit that results from a changed heart.

*10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"*

It's the classic wrong question. We aren't surprised when broken humans ask the wrong question. This is where broken man begins. I'm separated from God, how do I fix it.

We have 20-20 hindsight 2,000 years later. We know now the answer is, you can't fix it. There's nothing you can do. God has to accomplish our salvation.

History is littered with people trying to do enough penance to get right with God. Walk to Mexico City on your knees. Sleep on a bed of nails. Put thorns in your underwear. Emaciate yourself and live somewhere in a cave, alone. Figure out other bizarre ways to punish yourself. That's what God likes.

We'll see this same question later put to Jesus by the rich young ruler. He had it all. Wealth, power, religion, what was missing. And Jesus gets right to the point. What wouldn't you give to have God. What's more important to you to hold onto, if that's what it cost to leave all behind and put God first.

In that case it was the wealth. John the baptizer isn't a mind reader, Jesus knew what men were thinking. Having the wealth was more important to that fellow than having God, so he went away empty.

So the better question isn't What shall we do? but What is it that if it

was required of you to have God, you would not do? Because coming out of the authority to reign of Satan and coming under the authority to reign of God is radical business.

When a person does that, really makes that heart change, God owns all of you. You belong to Him. And He will make changes. Some of us are hard headed and He has to knock us flat to get our attention. We belong to a new King. Our lives, the evidence, the fruit of that repentance will look radically different than what is the ordinary accepted norms of the old world we left.

John just gets real practical. If there's a heart change, here are some things that should be different;

*11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."*

This sounds like social gospel. Is it? We Americans struggle with this principle much more than the folks John was talking to. This is an easy stumbling block for us.

The underlying principal is detachment from this world. The apostle John in one of his letters to the church says; *Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

The principal is like the old chorus says. *This world is not my home. I'm just a passin' through.* Detachment from the world. This world we live in is not our home. We need to hold our stuff . . . loosely.

If we love this world, and this world's stuff, we need to remind ourselves who is ruler of this world system. Satan is the god (small g) of this world. So if we love this world, and it's stuff, a conflict of interest with

our new Master can happen.

In the 10 commandments God tells the Jews that He is a jealous God. Jealous for our affections. Jealous that we would hold onto Him far more tightly than any of the stuff in this current world.

So, then, where are your affections? What's important to you. Getting more stuff? Enjoying your stuff?

None of that is sin. God gives His children good things to enjoy. Sometimes I think He tests us by giving us good things. Can we have the good things and hold Him in our hearts first. Number one.

That's where the conflict comes. In the book of Proverbs, a wise man named Agur said this; *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the bread that is my portion. Otherwise, I may have too much and deny You, saying, "Who is the LORD?" Or I may become poor and steal, profaning the name of my God.* Pr. 30:8b - 9

There's a constant tension in our world. Enjoy the good things God has given you, but hold Him first and foremost in your affections. Hold the good things of this world loosely.

*Vs. 11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."*

How many of you have come into contact with a new word I never heard until about a year ago. Woke. Have you heard that term. Someone is woke.

It's all over the evangelical church in 2018 and will be even more in 2019. Are you woke. Hip Christians are woke. Anybody?

Woke means you're tuned to issues that this world is concerned about. Sympathetic to causes like climate change. Unequal opportunity. Oppression of the poor by the rich. The haves vs the have nots. Racial injustice. Social injustice. Sexual choice injustice.

Many of the things I just described are good causes. There has been real inequality in our land, as good as it is. Inequality between the races is low hanging fruit. There has been deep seated injustice. No denying that reality.

Donald Trump sort of forced the issue in our country. If you want the definition for woke, it's the polar opposite of Donald Trump. So, evangelicalism is trying to dig itself out of the stigma that we actually voted to Donald Trump, by becoming more woke.

It's a big deal right now. Probably not in Tonopah, but in the christian church at large, this has become a huge issue. Good men, some of my hero's are trying to regroup by becoming more woke. Our image in the world is damaged and it's like the church is trying to do damage control with the world by being woke.

If that phenomenon interests you, I would encourage more reading by doing a search on what has been called; The Dallas Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel. <https://statementonsocialjustice.com/>

The pendulum swings and what happens is the church aligns itself with social justice and social causes, and some of that is very good, very noble, but it doesn't get anybody to heaven.

The underlying cause of all the problems that social justice is concerned to fix is the we have fallen into sin and the ruler of this world is the devil. Who's surprised that inequality exists? Who's surprised that the garden has thorns? Who can ultimately fix any of it?

The only viable solution is the gospel, and it's a gospel that removes people, one at a time, from this world and makes them belong to a new world order where Jesus Christ will have all authority.

Trying to fix this broken world is like trying to raise the ocean level by throwing stones into the sea. And Satan is just as happy getting people into hell with social gospel as he is with any other method. It falls short of addressing sin on a one by one personal basis.

The real gospel is telling people they have to come out of this world system and belong to a new master.

Why did I just say all of that? Because what John says here sounds very much like social gospel. *11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."*

That sounds like it just came out of the mouth of Karl Marx. What are we to do with that?

Giving people food and clothing doesn't save you, or them. BUT for people who actually DO belong to the King of kings, stuff, and food, are something we can share because we aren't holding tightly to this world's stuff.

This is a fruit, an evidence of a changed heart. Doing good. We don't do these things because we're working our way to God by doing them, we do these things because God owns us and has poured out His love in our hearts, and has blessed us with extra, that we can share.

Paul, after telling the Galatian Christians the works cannot save them, at the end of the letter says this; *So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.* Ga 6:10

Paul modify's what John the baptist said. Do good to all people. But your priority is to the people who are of the household of faith.

Mom was telling me the other day that she will be finished with her car very soon. The day is coming fast when she'll never use it again. I said it would be fun, since all the great grand kids are in pretty good shape car wise to give it to some foreign student who has come to study at the Master's seminary.

Mom said she thinks she's probably going to need the couple thousand bucks it might still be worth before it's all said and done.

But our thoughts go first to her needs, and if it was extra, to the household of faith. That's just kind of how my brain works. Giving money to save the whales doesn't purchase any treasure in heaven.

John the baptist isn't selling social gospel. But he is saying, this is what the evidence of real repentance looks like. We hold this worlds goods loosely. We hold our relationship with God first and foremost. We share with others who have less. We prioritize doing that with household of faith getting first dibs.

Now that we understand his mindset, the other things he said to other enquirers makes easy interpretation.

*vs.12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to."*

This one is very interesting if you know the circumstances. Tax collectors in Israel were considered to be turncoat outcasts. They had sold out to Rome. What could be worse than taking from your countrymen who considered Rome an occupier, and giving their money

to Rome.

In the new testament, tax collectors and sinners always appear together in the same sentence. The low life's. People to be shunned. Sinners. Dirty filthy sinners. And tax collectors. If we see them coming on the sidewalk, it's time to walk on the other side of the street. We don't want our feet to touch the same dust as theirs touched.

So John's answer is pretty radical if you look at it through a jewish lens. Some tax collectors want to be baptized by John. The jews would say for John to touch those filthy people would dis-qualify him from touching anyone else.

John's answer is telling. He doesn't tell them to quit their profession and first go through some ritual cleansing and then come back and be baptised.

Tax collecting is a legitamate profession. And in God's kingdom, it's neither here nor there. It's morally neutral. You can be a tax collector and be a citizen in the kingdom of God. With one caveat. *“Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.”*

Rome gave them authority to collect more than what they had to send to Rome. Of course. People have to live. The worker is worthy of his hire. But John tells them, don't collect more than the percentage on top that Roma told you to collect.

Some of them were getting rich using the power of Rome to exact more money from the people than what Rome allowed. That's stealing. John says, do your work. Collect what Rome said to collect. Keep your legitamate portion. Don't collect more than that. Even if you can. It's a form of stealing.

The kingdom of God recognizes legitimate pay for legitimate work. God

frowns on extracting more than what is allowed. Stealing is sin. Fruit of the kingdom, fruit of true repentance is honest dealing, even in an unpopular profession where people are going to respond to what you do with hatred.

*Vs. 14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, “And what about us, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages.”*

The same exact principles are working here. How does the Kingdom of God see the profession of soldiers? We could fold the service of policemen in here perfectly also. Same thing.

These were people who had authority to keep order and preserve safety. That's their job. Killing people when necessary. What does the Bible say about that? Will John build a case for conscientious objectors? Is the Kingdom of God about a kinder gentler type of folks, policemen and soldiers need not apply? After-all, soldiers and policemen are not very woke. Right?

Once again, no surprises here. In this world that Satan rules you can count on some of the effects of sin. Chaos instead of order. Wickedness instead of decency. Murder and every kind of evil are the order of the day. We're watching our own land descend into anarchy. Remove the rules and the rule keepers and anarchy happens.

So our book tells us God has given us governments and rulers and people in authority for our own wellbeing in this fallen world. Policement and soldiers are a gift from God in a fallen world.

The first thing you mothers need to teach your children is an old Bible verse about soldiers and policement. They beareth not the sword in vain. They have the authority to kill you if you are breaking the laws of order

that keep this world livable. Children need to learn to honor policemen and soldiers, and to obey what they command.

When God removes His bride out of this world He's going to allow 7 years of just what the folks in the protest marches are asking for. No rules. No restraints. Just let wickedness and anarchy have a 7 year run. See how things work out with all restraints that God has given by His grace, are taken away.

You can read the book of Revelation to see how that works out. Soldiers and policemen are more than legitimate professions, they are God's gift to keep order in this world that Satan runs. That's why us non-woke type people go around thanking them for their service.

Anyways, back to John. Given what we just said, that the Bible teaches, what do you think John will say to these folks. *And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."*

Wise council. Don't abuse your God ordained authority. Don't get involved in using your authority to rob people of their stuff, and don't be a false accuser.

And one last little tid-bit for all of us. This'll be the most difficult one of all. *Be content with your wages.* Any christian union organizer's here? That to me has always been a conundrum. The whole point of a union seems to be to make people un-content with their wages. At all times. The employer is the enemy. They have more they could give if they wanted to. They're job is to deprive you of as much wages as possible.

People who are citizens of the kingdom of God, who belong to another Master, who are temporary citizens in this world, who are holding on to their stuff loosely, and sharing with others who have less, have this command from God whose authority wrote every word in this book.

*Be content with your wages.* Contentment. What a thought!

One of the fruits of God ownership, one of the things that christians have that set us apart from this world; contentment.

Paul speaks of contentment to Timothy. It's the legacy that makes us different from the world around us.

*6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. 7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

Think of all the rich and famous people you know anything about. Now think of the content ones. This worlds stuff doesn't bring contentment. Peace in your heart because your sins are forgiven and a kind merciful God cares for you brings real contentment.

