



WEEKLY STUDY

WEEK 2

As we've seen in Luke, God can pursue and recover lost things. It doesn't require our participation, but God seems to have chosen to use other people in His rescue plan. Continuing in our study of the Book of Luke, we heard about John the Baptist's role in preparing the way for Jesus. We were invited to consider how our lives are also meant to make way for Jesus to enter into the lives of others and into the brokenness of this world. May each of the roles you play in this life align more and more with the purpose for which you were created—to make way for Jesus.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: LUKE 3.1-3

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.³ And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

- This extended list of rulers and leaders serves one primary purpose—to place the story of Jesus within the context of world history. It's important because Jesus has changed the world. Notice that John started responding to the word of God right where he was. He went into the region around the Jordan and prepared the way for a movement that was so much bigger than himself or his region. **Do you have a sense of God's word guiding your life? Where has it led you? What has it led you to do?**
- *God, speak to me and guide my steps. I want to faithfully respond to your voice with all of my life. Amen.*

TUESDAY: LUKE 3.4-6

As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

*‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.*

*⁵Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall become straight,
and the rough places shall become level ways,*

⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

- This language used by Isaiah and quoted here in Luke would have been familiar to the audience of both. When a royal person traveled through the wilderness, there were people whose job it was to clear out the road ahead. Literally preparing the way for someone to travel. When John stepped into that role, it was not just about the physical path that Jesus would walk on, but a pathway into the hearts of people who encounter Jesus. **What areas of your life and heart need to be leveled out in order that Jesus might fully rule in your heart?**
- *God thank you for sending the forerunners of the faith to prepare the world for salvation in Jesus Christ. May all of my life point to him. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: LUKE 3.7-14

He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”⁸ Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.⁹ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?”¹¹ And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics^[a] is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.”¹² Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”¹³ And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.”¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”

- The image of the tree that does not bear fruit tossed in the fire echoes what we read in John 15.1-6. If we remain connected to Jesus we will bear good fruit. If we do not abide in Jesus we are not living out our purpose. The crowd asking John what it is that they should do seems to have a desperate tone. *If what you say is true, we better do something about it.* **Has God ever used someone else to reveal what is truly going on within you? How did that experience feel?**
- *Jesus, I want to abide in you. Keep me connected to your life-giving purpose through me. Amen.*

THURSDAY: LUKE 3.15-17

As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ,¹⁶ John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

- John was drawing attention with this message of repentance and baptism. Under his teaching, the people went from a thin faith based more on cultural identity to an expectation that God was truly at work and that a baptism of spirit and fire was on its way. It caused them to wonder if John himself was the one who would be God's Messiah. If he had been the Messiah, the unquenchable fire of verse 17 would have been right in front of them. Surely they had a mixture of fear and hope in his message. **Is it possible to have a healthy fear of God and his righteousness? How do John's harsh words seem to still be offering hope to the people? Do they offer hope to you?**
- *God, you have made our rescue possible through Jesus. It is not always easy to follow him but it is always good. Give me strength to humbly live out the calling of a baptism of water, fire, and Spirit. Amen.*

FRIDAY: LUKE 3.18-20

So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.¹⁹ But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done,²⁰ added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

- This seems like an add-on to the story we have been reading this week. But for John, this was a result of his prophetic voice. It's not rare to read of those who point to the movement of God experiencing suffering of their own. It was unsettling and inconvenient at best for Herod to have to face up to his choices. When the crowd had a mirror placed in front of them, they asked what they should do. When Herod saw a reflection of his life, he punished the one holding the mirror. John would eventually lose his life because he inserted himself into the business of this dysfunctional family. **When have you had an opportunity to point out the poor actions of another person? What impact did that have on you? Would you do it again?**
- *God of grace and redemption, give me a heart that is open to the correction of trusted people in my life. May I be strong enough to respond in humility and repentance. Amen.*

SATURDAY: PSALM 36.5-9

*Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the skies.*

⁶ *Your righteousness is like the highest mountains,
your justice like the great deep.*

You, LORD, preserve both people and animals.

⁷ *How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!
People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.*

⁸ *They feast on the abundance of your house;
you give them drink from your river of delights.*

⁹ *For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.*

- **Read through today's Psalm. What words stand out to you? When faced with a hard word from a messenger (like the people received from John the Baptist) how does the proclamation of Psalm 36 give you grace and hope to repent and make way for Jesus?**
- *God, I look to you for every good thing that I need. In moments of concern or doubt, hide me in the shadow of your wings. Amen.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Our purpose is to make way for Jesus.

List 5 key roles you play in life. (i.e., friend, leader, teacher, parent, coach) Then take several minutes to consider how each one might be used by God to make way for Jesus.

Key Roles

Making Way for Jesus