

**The Problem and the Solution:
December 6, 2020**

Some of you know and remember Pete Jensen. **[1 Pete]**
Pete and Lisa were members here at Joy...
But moved back to Nebraska...
Because they didn't like us...
No more.

No. That's not the truth.
The reason they moved...
Is the same reason that many of you...
Moved here to Colorado.

To be near to their grand-babies!

So... needless to say...
We miss them...
And totally understand...
The change in their priorities.

But while they lived here...
Pete served our church...
As the treasurer...
For many many moons.

Our current treasurer is Michele Templeman.
And they both served the same function.

They were oversee...
And present to council...
The current financial situation...
And basic budgetary items.

Oversight.

But for those who were on council...
When Pete was treasurer...
You will surely remember...
The perennial bee in his bonnet. **[2 Copier]**

The photocopier.
He was always holding us...
Accountable...
For the number of copies we made...
And if we were using the duplex feature...
And if we were just wasting money...
By making copies.

The real problem was...
That we were charged...
A certain amount to lease the copier...
And an additional per copy charge.

It drove him crazy.
Which was kind of fun to watch.

But you know...
Back when copy machines were first established..
As the industrial standard...
By the Xerox company...

They pioneered the idea...
That you could only lease...
Their machines...
Instead of outright owning them.

And would have to pay a per copy rate.
Which is still what's happening now.

See... in their wisdom...
And their ability to forecast the need...
They saw the market...
Wasn't about the actual machine...
To make the copies...

The need that would not go away...
Were the actual copies.
The machines were necessary...
To get the work done.

But the money was in the copies.

Brilliant.

This is proof of the old idiom... **[3 Plato]**
Necessity is the mother of invention.
They focussed in on the need...
And made the machine...
And the system...
To solve the problem.

To their advantage and profit... of course.

Necessity is the mother of invention...
Is attributed to Plato...
It's not an exact quote...
But he captured the essence of the idea.

And Albert Einstein... **[4 Einstein]**
Took the idea and ran with it.

He said.
Out of clutter...
Find SIMPLICITY.
From discord...

Find HARMONY.
In the middle of difficulty...
Lies OPPORTUNITY.

Ok. That was the long way around... **[5 Prepare]**
To get to John.
The cousin of Jesus.
The baptist.

The one who Isaiah...
Was talking about...
When he said...
I am sending my messenger...
Ahead of you...
Who will prepare your way.

That was John's job.
His primary function...
In the incredible and huge vision...
Of what God was doing...
How God was working...
In the world.

John was called to prepare.
The way for Jesus.

But not only...
Was he the guy to prepare things...
For Jesus to come into the world.

He was also calling us...
To do the same thing.

He was a voice...
Crying out in the wilderness...
Prepare the way of the Lord.
Make his paths straight.

The one who had the job...
To prepare for Jesus.
Told us... that our job...
Was to prepare for Jesus too.

We are supposed to get ready.

But the question is...
How the heck...
Are we supposed to make...
Ourselves and our world ready...
For the Savior... the son of God.

Well... it starts with us.

John gave us the answer.
He proclaimed...
A baptism of repentance...
For the forgiveness of sin.

The way we prepare for Jesus...
To get ourselves...
Ready to receive him.

That entails.
Repentance.

But to repent.
We need to understand...
The need.

I read an illustration... **[6 Dirty Mug]**
That's kind of interesting.

Let's say...
I invite you...
To come over to my house.
To just hang out...
And play some cards...
Or Corn hole.

That would be fun.

Well... part of hosting...
And preparing for you...
Would be to ask...
If you would like...
A nice refreshing...
Coca-cola...
Or whatever you drink...

Would you accept the offer?

Of course you would! Sure... you would say.
That would be lovely.

However... what if...
The cup I took out of the cupboard...
To serve you...
The coke...

Was dirty.

You know...
Had old drippy coffee stains...
And a smoochy lipstick smudge...

Around the top of the mug...
And I poured your coke...
The one you were supposed to drink...

Right into...
That gross dirty mug.

Would you want it now?

Probably not.
You would want a clean mug.
You would want to know...
That I took the time...
To make things ready for you.

That I cared enough...
To provide a clean mug.
A clean slate.
A clean start.

This gets us back to mother necessity.

If we don't understand our need...
Then we won't understand...
What God is trying to do...
Why God wants us to prepare.
What God wants us to do.

We have to start at the beginning.
The problem. **[7 The Problem]**

There is a deficit...
Inside of us.
A weakness.

A propensity...
To crave those things...
That aren't good for us.

A propensity...
To do those things...
That hurt us...
Or the people around us.

A propensity...
To say things.
Think things.
Believe things.

That are contrary to God.

It's the sign of our broken relationship.
And our desire... to be our own God.

And I know that's hard to admit.
But we NEED a solution...
To the problem of sin.

And that solution...
Is what John is proclaiming...
Repentance for the forgiveness of sin.

The gateway to the hope.
And life.
And love.
Is repentance.

And it's a double edged sword.
Not only does it set us free from our own sin.
But it also is how we get prepared.
To receive Christ.

So. To understand what that all means...
We have to go back...
To one really basic question.

What is repentance? **[8 Repentance]**

Repentance is a CHANGE OF MIND...
Regarding sin and God,
Specifically, an INWARD TURNING...
From sin to God.
180 degrees.

It is hating what you once loved
And loving what you once hated,
Exchanging irresistible sin
For an irresistible Christ.

Repentance is a call.

A Call for us to stop destructive behavior.

A Call for us get over ourselves...
Our self-centeredness...
Our arrogance and our pride.

Repentance is a Call...
To make room for Jesus to be our Lord.

I mean.
I don't know if this is worse...
Because we are Americans.
But it seems to be through all people...
Through all time...

We humans... are fiercely independent.

If you don't believe me.
Think about how many times...
In the recent past...
Like the last few months...

People have acted as though...
it's their God-given right...
To behave any way we want.

No one can tell me...
What I can or cannot do.

No one can tell me...
What I can or cannot say.

No one can tell me.
What to think and believe.

No one can tell me...
Anything.

Because I AM...
Whoa. Funny.
Isn't that the name of God?

I am in charge of me.
You all are not the boss of me.

But... if you are a Christian...
A follower of Christ.
If you repent of yourself...
And your own sinfulness... **[9 The Boss]**

You die to yourself.
And live to Christ.

In fact... by choosing live in Christ...
You are admitting... confessing...
Saying out loud...
For the whole world to hear.

I am not capable of doing this on my own.
I am not 100% trustworthy...
To fulfill the will of God.

I am not ALL that I pretend to be...
In front of other people...
On a daily basis.

And here's the big one.
My own sinfulness...
Leads to DEATH.

And not just our death.
But the death of the people around us.
The death of relationships.

And I know this may be hard to digest...
But the death of families.
The death of communities.
The death of the world.

I'm not just being dramatic.

If we have NO sense...
Of right and wrong.
Of meeting the needs of other people.
Of God leading and guiding our lives.

We are contributing...
To the death of the structures...
That hold our lives together.

And people of faith say...
I know we can't fix it.
Or save ourselves.
Or make it all right.

But we know the One who can. The Savior.

If we believe in Christ.
I mean... sincerely believe in Christ...
Then in fact...
He is the boss of you.
And he is the boss of me.

And if we submit our will to Jesus.

Then we are ready.
Ready to receive him.
Emulate him.
Live for him.

So John is calling us...
To prepare for Jesus.
To repent...
To receive forgiveness of our sins.

But to do that.
We need to admit that it's OUR problem.
That he came to fix.

So... that's the ADVENT challenge today.

We each need to ask ourselves...
In all honesty and humility.

What do I need to confess?

What do I need to do...
To turn my life around...
From my own arrogance and pride...
And illusion of self-reliance...

What do I need to do...
To make my life...
Ready... to really receive Jesus.

See...
Jesus is the solution...
To our greatest problem.

We have the need.
He has the solution.

And all we have to do...
Is prepare.

Prepare for forgiveness.
Prepare for the promise of life.
Prepare for him.

He is coming.
He has already come.
And now... he's waiting for us.

To get our hearts and minds ready...
And make room...
For Jesus... who the Christ.

Thanks be to God.
Amen!