

Ways and Path - True Repentance

by Erlo Stegen

Erlo Stegen emphasizes the importance of true repentance as a preparation for the coming kingdom of God.

Duration: 40:03

Topics: "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being prepared and ready for the coming of Jesus. He references Martin Luther's analogy of a storm passing by, highlighting that God works in His own time and we must not let the opportunity pass us by. The message of John the Baptist, as stated in the Bible, was to repent for the kingdom of heaven is near. The preacher explains that John called for the straightening of crooked paths and the preparation of the way for the Lord. He also mentions the Autobahn in Germany as an example of a straight and efficient road, comparing it to the highway of holiness that should be made for Jesus.

Transcript

We find our text in Matthew 3, from verse 1. In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the desert of Judea, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near. He who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah, a voice of one calling in the desert, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight paths for him. He who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah, a voice of one calling in the desert, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight paths for him.

John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan, Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them, You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father. I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. We'll read thus far. It says, In those days John the Baptist appeared.

In those days. Which days were they? This was the time of the Lord. It was the fulfillment of what the prophets had said.

Isaiah and them. Malachi. Who had said, The time of the Lord is coming.

When this will happen, this event will take place. And now the time was to be. God has his own times.

When his time comes, make sure that you are available and ready. You've heard, like being left behind at the train station, when the train is ready to leave, be on board. Imagine.

But it hasn't come to stop there. It's on its way. It's passing by.

Now the working of God, God does in his own time. Make sure that you use the time lest it pass you by. In those days, John the Baptist appeared.

Now, in those days, and Peter also testifies to that, it began with the baptism of John. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ begins its story with the baptism of John. And then that time goes by till it is the time when Jesus comes to fetch his church.

So what was the message of John? He said, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Malachi had prophesied about this day. Where he says in chapter 3 verse 1, see, I will send my messenger who will prepare the way before me.

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. He will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.

Now we've heard how that wave of cleansing came to the young and older people there in Europe. Now here it asks the question, who can endure the day of his coming? Why? Now we've said, you should not flee from it, but rather draw near to it. But the word of the Lord asks, who will endure, who will identify with this when it comes? Because those who sit on their sins, who cling to their hidden sins, they will find themselves resisting and criticizing and hating the work of God.

But the one who thirsts for it and the one who prays daily, Lord, let thy kingdom come. He will accept that message when one who is like John says, the kingdom is at hand. And so it says, the kingdom of heaven is near, therefore repent.

What is this repentance? Repentance has to do with your thinking, with your mind. It means to think differently, to change your mind, that your way would turn around. That your speaking would turn.

Your opinions will change. The way you see things will change. Your step will be different.

The parents who came saw their children being different, being new, and they marveled. Repentance is what had happened. There was a change in their mind, in their thinking, in their speech, in their step.

Now regarding your thinking, it says, now repent, therefore let your thinking turn around. They confessed what was known, and how the devil had entered through them. Confessed regarding their worldly habits, their worldly clothing, because the devil can come in through anything.

As God brings it, in the beginning of this revival, we experience this repentance of God at work. Of course, people come along with their own ideas, and they try and mix things up and confuse things, bring in sin. But may God work that he who has not met up with this may truly experience it.

Now John said, behold the kingdom of God is at hand, Jesus is near, therefore repent. All Judea and Jerusalem came out then into the wilderness to be baptized with this baptism of John, of repentance and confessional sin. But John, seeing the Pharisees and Sadducees also joining the crowd, he used strong words against them and said, Who taught you to flee from the wrath to come? So the one who doesn't truly repent when God is moving only meets with the wrath of God.

He said to them, show the fruit of repentance. Reveal that which is in keeping with repentance, those secret phone calls of yours, those secret things you've been up to, confess it. He said to them, show the fruit of repentance, those secret phone calls of yours, those secret things you've been up to, confess it.

Now this repentance is still necessary as we read in Acts 17 verse 3 where it says, And God winked or God closed an eye to the times of ignorance, but now commands all men everywhere to repent. This repentance is necessary. You've got to be obedient to that command.

God charges everybody to repent. Because the kingdom of God is at hand, Jesus is near, therefore repent. In John's message he said, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight paths for him.

Let your crooked way be made straight, for there are things that are not righteous in your life. Now a way is always obvious to everybody, it's there, open. A highway is something noticeable, whether it is wagons or buses or whatever type of vehicle they go past on that highway.

And make straight paths for him. Tracks, these are paths or tracks like you might find a track of deer or buck, rabbits. You don't really see it clearly, but if a dog comes, it's able to sniff its track.

And you'll find that that dog will bark as it picks up the track and as it follows that track after that buck or deer or heart or whatever animal. There are some sins which are obvious to all. The drunkard's way is known, the prostitute's way is obvious to everyone, child, mouse alike.

And the one who is a thief and who steals all the time, people become scared of him and they warn their children to hide things when they come to their house. If a promiscuous woman comes into the neighborhood, wives are concerned. They recognize the promiscuity, they know this to be a loose woman and they are afraid of losing their men.

Exactly. Exactly the same with a promiscuous man. They recognize when he comes into the neighborhood, they pick up the loose sort, those who are following after their lusts, the widows who are not walking in holiness before the Lord and righteousness in the temple, those who are just messing around, they follow after that promiscuity.

It's known as their way. It is just known as the way of this person. Suddenly this woman dyes her hair another color.

It's the way of the world. And one recognizes the old mind hasn't yet been changed. This is still the mind of the world.

It hasn't been transformed. And this is recognized as the way of a person. Yes.

Now these paths mean the hidden things, those that are your secret devious ways, that which is not openly a way that is recognized by others but which you keep as a secret to yourself, the way that you speak over the telephone, that very thing which you don't want anybody else to get to know. These ways, these paths, these tracks must be repented of. That which is open and obvious and that which is deceitful and secret.

Have you repented of them yet? The text says who will stand on the day of his coming when his messenger comes to his temple? Who comes as a refiner's fire, who comes to cleanse his people where everything melts, even the sand melts. There is a heat and you experience the overwhelming heat thereof. And Jesus works with that fire.

That's why it says he will baptize his people with his spirit and fire. But not everybody is glad about that. Some people are of the opinion that they dare not expose what's really going on in their lives.

They're afraid of their reputation. What will others think of me? I've been hiding this for years. What will they say? If I admit this to a counsellor, what will that counsellor think of me? Maybe they'll get upset with me and expel me.

Nobody's chased away for repentance, for revealing their sin, only for hiding their sin. A good example of that is the autobahn in Germany. There are no valleys and no mountains that stand in the way of the autobahns.

They are so straight, they've lifted up valleys and brought down mountains to such an extent that even if you are going 200km on that autobahn, you'll find people overtaking you very fast. It says, make the way straight for the Lord, He who comes. Make a highway of holiness, He who is approaching.

You might buy a special expensive car, a Rolls Royce maybe, or a Chrysler Daimler, whatever fancy car it might be. But if you drive next to the road, next to the way, will you get to your destination? I challenge any one of you, take your car, whether it's a scrap or whether it's an expensive car, go on the main road here and then just go close to the road. You won't get to Belkham's Hill and you won't get to this hill on top.

If I'd have millions, I'd give them to you. You won't get very far. You can't drive next to the road.

You can be as close as possible to the road. It doesn't help. You've got to be on the road, not next to the road.

You won't get there. You can say, I'm going to hell. You're going to another place that starts with an H as well.

You're hell bound. Even if you're next to it, it's not good enough. You've got to be right on it.

The way of the Lord. The way of the Lord is a highway of holiness. No place for irritability there.

If there is still deceitfulness, still deception in your life, you belong to Satan himself. If one speaks of Satan as well, that makes you one. Until you truly repent and make the way straight and deal with those crooked paths, shall we stand to our feet and pray? We ask you, Lord, that you would make your fire to burn in our midst.

Lord, we've heard of your fire through the testimonies given here this morning. We've heard of that fire overseas. And Lord, we say, let that fire be burn in our midst.

That it might burn up the trash and all the rubbish. Burn up all sin. That your children would be cleansed from the evil as silver and gold is purified.

Work mightily, O God. We thank you and rejoice with those who receive and accept your gospel. And Lord, we've heard what the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ means and how the beginning is in repentance.

And that how you today, you command all men everywhere to repent. Work, O Lord, that they would be fruit in accordance with repentance and not be a brood of vipers. Amen.

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