

Luke 3:10-14. John Instructs Various Classes in Their Duties.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

John the Baptist preached to the people to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, and encouraged them to give to those in need and to live according to their station in life.

Scripture: Psalm 41:1, Ecclesiastes 11:1, John 15:5, Acts 16:31, Ephesians 4:28

Topics: "Repentance And Works", "Christian Stewardship"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer delves into the preaching of John the Baptist, emphasizing how he urged people to show sincere repentance through good works. While some inquired about their duties, the chief sin John highlighted was covetousness, revealing the people's attachment to material possessions. Mortimer underscores the importance of generosity and readiness to give to those in need, as exemplified in various biblical passages. The sermon explores how different groups, such as publicans and soldiers, sought guidance on their specific sins and duties, reflecting on the need for repentance and righteous conduct in various professions and roles.

Transcript

We have seen that John the Baptist was a very faithful preacher, one who spoke to the rich as well as to the poor of their sins. But we do not hear that the Pharisees and Sadducees took warning from his sermons--yet there were some people who did. The people (that is, the common people--as they are called) said, "What shall we do, then?" What did they mean by this question? Did they mean, "What shall we do to be saved?" No, that was not the question. We read, in the Acts, of a penitent jailer who said to the apostle Paul and his friend Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." (Acts 16:31.) No doubt John would have answered the people in the same manner, if they had asked him the same question; he would have said, "Believe in him who comes after me."

But the people did not ask this question. John had just been exhorting them to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, and had been telling them that every tree that brought forth bad fruit was cast into the fire. By fruit, you well know that he meant good works. John wanted the people to show by their conduct that their repentance was sincere. It must have gladdened his heart, when, after his sermons, they came to inquire what good works they ought to do.

It is a good sign when people ask questions about their duties. John, by his answer, shows us what was the chief sin of the people. He said, "He who has two coats, let him impart to him that has none, and he who has food let him do likewise." The chief sin of the people was covetousness! These people were not all rich. Covetousness was the sin of the poor, as well as of the rich. As we read in Jer. 8:10, "Everyone, from the least, even to the greatest, is given to covetousness."

Is this sin still very common? It is. People's hearts are still wrapped up in their property--their money, their clothes, their houses, their furniture, or their lands, whether they have little or much. People are so fond of their property that they are reluctant to part with any of it. But the word of God tells us that we should be ready to give--that we should even labor that we may have something to give. (Eph. 4:28; Acts 20:34, 35.)

Perhaps it will be asked, "Is it wrong to have two sets of clothes?" No! the expression "two coats," need not be taken literally. What then does it signify? That those who have more than enough for themselves, ought to give to those who have less than enough. The Scriptures do not forbid our saving against old age or sickness; but they command us to give to those who are in need. God will never allow any one to languish in distress through following this command; he will raise up friends for them in the time of need. "Blessed is the man that considers the poor." (Ps. 41:1.) Cast your bread upon the waters, for you shall find it after many days. (Eccles. 11:1.)

There was a poor servant who gave all her money to her destitute parents; she was overtaken by sickness early in life; she became unfit for service, and had no means of support; but God put it into the heart of Thomas Scott to take her into his house, and, though not rich himself, with the aid of some of his friends, he gladly supported her all her days, thinking it a blessing to have so pious a person in his family. Where could she have passed her life in greater peace than beneath the roof of this faithful minister?

If young people spend their money in pleasures, in fancy clothing, or in useless things, there is no promise for them to depend upon. But if they delight in giving to the poor for God's sake, they shall never be forsaken!

The publicans also asked John what they must do. These publicans were not like the publicans of these days; they did not keep public-houses; they collected the public taxes for the Romans. Their chief sin was DISHONESTY. They made people pay more taxes than the government required, and by their trickery they enriched themselves. In most trades and employments there is some temptation to dishonesty, and many people think that they may do whatever it is the custom to do. Let each of us inquire, "Is there anything I do in my employment, that I wish to conceal from my master--or my customers?" That practice is dishonest, however common it may be. If you really repent, you will stop being dishonest--though others should call you over strict and precise, and even try to injure you--because your conduct is a reproach to them.

Some soldiers next inquired what they must do. Does it surprise us to find that even soldiers had been moved by John's preaching? War is a terrible calamity. Were all men true Christians, there would be no war; yet John did not tell the soldiers to stop being soldiers, for the guilt of unjust wars lies rather upon those who begin and continue them--the kings and rulers--than upon the men who are hired to fight. John warned the soldiers against the sins most common in their profession. One of these was violence; the soldiers were apt to take things away by force--therefore John said, "Do violence to no man." They were also accustomed to accuse others falsely before the judges, perhaps for the sake of bribes; therefore he said, "Nor accuse any man falsely." They were also disposed to be discontented with their pay; therefore

he said, "Be content with your wages."

Would we like to inquire of John the Baptist what we ought to do? He would not give us all the same answer--he would point out different duties to us according to our places in life--such as servants or masters, parents or children--or according to our trade or profession.

But need we wish that John the Baptist were risen from the dead, that he might instruct us? Let us look into the epistles of Paul and Peter, and we shall find directions to servants and masters, to parents and children. Servants are directed to be meek, honest, and submissive; masters to be just and kind; children to be obedient and respectful. Parents are commanded to bring up their children piously, and not to provoke them to wrath. Young men are instructed to be sober-minded; young women to be keepers at home. Older men and women are warned against the love of wine. (See the epistles to Titus, and to the Colossians, and the first epistle of Peter.) Thus we are all set on our guard against the temptations of our age and station in life.

No doubt if people had come separately to John, he would have given still more particular directions. Each of us has some particular sin into which he is very apt to fall--one is most disposed to anger--another to vanity--another to envy--another to idleness--and another to gluttony.

We never deserve heaven by leaving off our sins; it is Christ who has purchased heaven by his blood to bestow it on those who believe in his name. But if we do really believe we shall bring forth good fruit--and forsake our sins. It is God alone who can change our hearts--but we must not wait until we feel right feelings, before we begin to act right. We must avoid everything that we know to be wrong, and entreat God to overcome the evil feelings of our hearts, (which we cannot subdue,) and to enable us to do that which is pleasing in his sight.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/favell-lee-mortimer/luke-310-14-john-instructs-various-classes-in-their-duties/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net