

INTRO

Name one simple thing that makes you happy?

READ

Matthew 3:1-17

Matthew 11:7-10

REFLECT & RESPOND

The life and ministry of John the Baptist was foretold by the prophet Isaiah and by Malachi centuries before he was born. He would prepare the way for Jesus. The hand of God was evident on his life: beginning with an angelic visitation to his father Zechariah, followed by the miracle of his conception, the choosing of his name, his encounter with Jesus while in the womb and so much more. All four gospels recount parts of his life, his ministry and even his death.

His ministry could be summed up with the word “prepare”. John was prepared by God in the wilderness to prepare a path to Jesus for many others to follow.

In light of John the Baptist’s life, let’s look at “The Way of the Wilderness” using 3 words: solitude, simplicity & preparation.

SOLITUDE

Take a minute to imagine John the Baptist’s life in the wilderness? Was it days? Weeks? Years? What might a day in his life look like?

Solitude

- waiting upon God
- meditation on His word
- resulting in spiritual strength

Qu: Discuss practices of solitude that are a part of your life? Or that you would like to grow in? Any current hindrances?

SIMPLICITY

“And the child (*John*) grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.” — Luke 1:80

John’s life seems to have been a simple one: simple clothing, simple diet, a life in the wilderness set apart for God — growing strong.

In 1960 A.W. Tozer wrote, “Modern civilization is so complex as to make the devotional life all but impossible. It wears us out by multiplying distractions and beats us down by destroying our solitude, where otherwise we might drink and renew our strength before going out to face the world again.”

This global pandemic, our current wilderness, has simplified parts of our lives.

Qu: Are there any ways in which this wilderness, has given opportunity for you to renew your strength?

PREPARATION

As crowds came to the wilderness to hear John the Baptist, they came in expectation wondering if perhaps John was the Christ. They were looking for the promised Saviour of Israel. John was ready. He pointed the way to Jesus. John’s years in the wilderness prepared him to prepare the way for others to see the Saviour.

God prepares his people in the wilderness for life beyond the wilderness.

Qu: If the way of the wilderness is a time for preparation, what could God be preparing us, his people, for?

PRAY

The message of the wilderness hasn’t changed. Jesus parting words in Matthew 28 echo the ministry of John the Baptist as do the words of Peter’s first sermon in Acts 2, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

- pray for boldness to bring the good news to those you know who aren’t yet followers of Jesus
- pray together for friends or family members to respond to the message of the gospel