

Sermon preached by Canon Jim Holbeck at the 5pm service on Sat 8<sup>th</sup> Dec and at the 8am and 10am services on Sun 9<sup>th</sup> December 2007 at St Thomas's Anglican Church Port Macquarie, NSW

### GETTING READY FOR THE COMING OF THE KING

The Gospel reading to day begins with the words, *Mat 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* That was John the Baptist's message 2000 years ago as he prepared people for change. Jesus was coming as King to establish His kingdom. Perhaps thousands of people were changed as they responded to John's message.

You or your loved ones can become different people starting today. It won't be a case of you trying hard to change yourself. Rather it is letting God Himself change you from within. How can that happen? We get some insights from the reading from Mat 3:1-12.

#### 1). EVERYONE NEEDS TO "REPENT" OF THEIR SIN BEFORE GOD

Repentance was commanded by God through the following people:-

- John the Baptist. Mat 3:1 *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*
- Jesus in Mat 4:17. *From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*
- Peter in Acts 2:38. *And Peter said to them, "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."*
- Paul in Acts Act 26:19-20, Paul told King Agrippa that he had preached to Jews and to Gentiles *that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.*

We too need to repent of our sin in today's world. What does it mean to repent?

#### a). What repentance is NOT.

##### i. It's not just feeling sorry for our sins.

Many people in jail are sorry for their sins in the sense they are sorry they got caught. But if they knew they could get away with it, they would probably do it again.

ii. **It's not just a deep sense of remorse.** Judas Iscariot was one of the disciples Jesus called to follow Him as an apostle. After he betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, he was full of remorse that he had sinned in betraying innocent blood. He committed suicide as a result of his remorse, but he didn't repent of his sins in the biblical sense of the word. As Paul wrote in 2 Cor 7:10 *Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*

Judas' worldly sorrow brought his own death. He didn't turn to God for forgiveness and cleansing, and missed out on eternal life.

iii. **It's not just carrying a whole lot of guilt around.** Repentance is not going around with a sad look on our faces, so that we are always saying "I'm such a rotten person. I don't deserve to be loved or forgiven." Repentance releases us from guilt, so that we can hold our heads high, knowing that we are forgiven in Jesus. True repentance always takes us to God for His forgiveness.

#### b). What repentance REALLY IS.

i. **The Greek word for repentance is metanoia, means primarily a change of mind.** In the NT it means a change of attitude towards our sins so that we recognise them as evil, and decide to turn away from them. We don't rationalise them or try to excuse ourselves; we call a spade a spade and acknowledge our guilt in the sight of God.

##### ii. It also means turning from sin to God.

Repentance means a change of mind in relation to God. We recognise that sin in any form grieves God as a Person, and so we turn to Him to ask for His forgiveness.

iii. **It means a change in one's lifestyle.** Not only do we turn to God to ask for His forgiveness but we also ask Him for His help not to do it again.

Some of those who came out to hear John the Baptist were the religious leaders of the day. But it seems they came to listen, but not to act on what was said. John rebuked them for their hardness of heart, *"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? {8} Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. {9} 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. {10} 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."*

The religious leaders had to show changes in their lives, as the outward evidence that they had really repented of their sin. If there was no fruit of repentance in their lives, they too would perish like the worst of unrepentant sinners. God wants us all to repent of everything that has caused hurt and harm to ourselves or to others and caused offence to God.

The delay in His second coming is the evidence of His love for us, in giving us the time to repent of our

sin. 2 Pet 3:9 *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* God is waiting for the last person He knows is going to repent and then Jesus will come. That will be the end of human history as we know it. When He comes it will be too late for anyone to repent. We need to repent now while we have time.

**c). How do I “repent?” The place of “confession”.** *3:6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.* The words used for “confess” in the New Testament are *exhomologeo* and *homologeo*.

They mean “to say the same as”. That is in confessing our sins we are saying the same thing that God has said about our sin. We are agreeing with God’s verdict on any thought, word or deed which is contrary to what God wants for us.

Repentance is not just saying that I did it. Rather it is saying that I did it and it was wrong in the sight of God. Repentance means 3 things.

- i). It means confessing our sins to God, admitting our guilt before Him.
- ii). It means then going on to ask His forgiveness.
- iii). It means asking for His help never to do it again.

If we don’t do those 3 things we haven’t really repented of our sin.

## **2). EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE BAPTISED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND FIRE**

*Mat 3:11, “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”*

**a). John the Baptist’s ministry was one of preparing the people of God for their coming Messiah and King.** It was an outward washing but anticipated the “real” baptism by Jesus which would have much greater impact on the lives of those who responded to Him.

**b). Jesus’ baptism with the Holy Spirit as the Messiah and King is an inward reality.**

It brings inward cleansing so that we know the sin and guilt has gone. It brings a sense of being purified by the fire of the Holy Spirit so that the old habits and motivations are being purged. We realise that He is changing us so that we are becoming more and more new. In fact more and more like Jesus.

**c). How can I allow Jesus to baptise me with the Holy Spirit and with fire?** Jesus is alive today.

Every day in this world there are thousands of people who are being faced with the claims of Jesus on their lives. Many of them have had the same experience as many of us here today.

We felt something was missing in our lives. We had a sense that God was outside our lives but wanted to come into them to change them.

Some of us heard these words of Jesus recorded in Rev 3:20 of the Risen Christ standing outside the door of our lives and knocking on the door of our hearts wanting us to open our hearts to Him. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*

Many of us here remember what happened as we invited the Lord Jesus to come into our lives. He came in and immediately began to change us. Jesus had baptised us by His Holy Spirit and life would never be the same again. Jesus had begun to cleanse us from sin and guilt and to purify us by the presence and power of His Holy Spirit.

Jesus can do the same for you today. He wants everyone to repent of their sin and to invite Him into their lives. He wants to baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He wants to fill you with the presence and power of His Holy Spirit. Why not ask Him to do that for you if you have never opened your life to Him before.

### **PRAYER:-**

Lord Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner needing forgiveness.

I thank You that You died on the cross to take away my sins.

I now invite You to come into my life and to baptise me with Your Holy Spirit and with fire so that I might live for you to Your glory.

Fill me with Your Spirit so that I might show forth Your presence and power in my life. I ask this in Your own precious name of Jesus. AMEN.