

Gospel: Luke 3:1-6 C Advent 2 December 5, 2021

1In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, **2**during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. **3**He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, **4**as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. **5Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; **6**and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”**

Introduction of a new prophet with echoes of OT prophets.

Reminder that God’s promises come to fulfillment within the context of physical history.

Dating (AD / CE) didn’t begin until 533 CE; events were dated in relation to rulers of the period or the number of years since the founding of Rome. Approximately 28 AD / CE

Pontius Pilate (procurator from 26-36 CE; Herod Antipas (tetrarch over Galilee, 4 BCE – 39 CE; Herod Philip (east of Jordan until 34CE); Lysanias of Abilene (Syria) – unknown

“He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.” (1:52)

Proclaims the triumphal return of the presence of God among the people of God.

“son of Zechariah” – follows the formula for the call of an inspired prophet as seen in the OT. (son of Elizabeth – Mary’s cousin; Zechariah became mute after doubting)

“wilderness” – key place of activity in Luke (testing, prayer, withdrawal, miracles)

Also place of chaos and disorder; dwelling place of negative demons; unnecessary travel through or stay in that region would have been considered deviant behavior.

(The locale and ascetic lifestyle suggest that he trained with Essenes of Qumran or was familiar with them.)

V 3 – brief summary of John’s ministry upon receiving the word from the Lord; appears to have been an itinerant preacher who confined his work to the region around the Jordan.

Herod Antipas – Tiberius on western shore of Sea of Galilee; near enough to hear John’s condemnation regarding him and Herodias, which led to John’s imprisonment and death.

“Repentance” – preparation for the impending judgment, an acceptance that repentance alone – not status, blood, or ritual – can bring about forgiveness when the judgment arrives.

For Luke, John’s baptism is the preparation for the ministry, life, and death of Jesus, because those who accept John’s call show themselves humble before God and willing to submit to God’s word, ready to acknowledge the Messiah of the Lord.

Because John is in the wilderness Luke can see John as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy of a voice proclaiming in the wilderness to prepare the way for the Lord.

Originally a word to the exiles in Babylon (brought comfort to the people of Israel, that their time of oppression would end with God’s rescue – that God had not forgotten them and would not neglect them.

Hearing these words, Luke’s listeners would understand John was the voice that was to prepare them to receive the promised redemption.

Thus John’s message really is “good news” for his message of repentance is the one that prepares the way for the Lord, while those who accept and act upon it show themselves ready for the Lord to enact his comfort.

John’s coming was predicted... and his message was the one that truly began the good news.

Luke presents on seamless message proclaimed by the two, first prepared for by John and then embodied by Jesus.

Vv 4-6 Luke expands on quote that begins Mark’s gospel. Doesn’t mention John’s garb or diet. Emphasizes three Lukan themes: (1) John’s role as a prophet; (2) The call for an ethical renewal in Israel, and (3) The extension of the work of salvation to all peoples.