

A voice cries out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.' So let us listen, and turn to the Lord in penitence and faith.

cf John 1.23

This is one of the Church of England's invitation to confession in the season of Advent. It connects us with the significant character in the story of Jesus, John the Baptist. The importance of John in the divine scheme of things is summed up best in the testimony of Jesus himself. "Among them that are born of women there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist" (Mt. 11:11).



Read, Matthew 3.1-12

How would you describe him?

- The description of John is brief and stark. (Mt. 3:4)
- His dietary fare was that generally consumed by the poorer elements of society. He stood in bold relief to the wealthy, indulgent Jews of his day.
- John was somewhat reclusive (Mt. 11:18): "Eating and drinking" stood for socializing. The prophet was not a party-goer.
- He did not seek out the multitudes. Rather, somehow, he attracted them. Hundreds, if not thousands, were immersed by him.

John's lifestyle was a veritable walking sermon!

What choices in life, what lifestyle, have you made that seek to express God's intentions and purposes for his creation?

John's mission can be summed up by one word, "preparer." Both Isaiah (40.3) and Malachi (3.1) had announced that he would "prepare" the way for the coming of God among them.

How do we help others to be ready for the coming King? (as a church, as a home group, in your life)

The message of John was a simple one: Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.

Of the four quotes here under, which one speak to you the most and why?

"If you are renewed by grace, and were to meet your old self, I am sure you would be very anxious to get out of his company."

— **Charles H. Spurgeon**

"The church is not a theological classroom. It is a conversion, confession, repentance, reconciliation, forgiveness and sanctification centre, where flawed people place their faith in Christ, gather to know and love him better, and learn to love others as he designed."

— **Paul David Tripp,**

"The heavens will not be filled with those who never made mistakes but with those who recognized that they were off course and who corrected their ways to get back in the light of gospel truth."

— **Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

"The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart."

— **C.S. Lewis, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader**

If you still have time and energy: How do you share a message of repentance in today's world?