

What Shall We Do?

In pulpits across the world, the call to repent and be baptized usually leads us to Peter's powerful words on Pentecost.

"Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' 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'" (Acts 2:37-38).

But paving the way to Jesus, John the Baptist proclaimed the same prescription to God's people — repent and be baptized (Luke 3:3). And just like Peter's audience, those who heard John's message asked, "What shall we do?" Let's look at a few *"fruits in keeping with repentance"* (Luke 3:8) that John shares.

The Big Idea: True repentance destroys our need for earthly accomplishment and materialism.

Be Helpful

"And the crowds asked him, 'What then shall we do?' And he answered them, 'Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise'" (Luke 3:10-11).

Jesus said these same words to the rich ruler, though he seemed quite resistant to the idea (Luke 18:22-23). If you have a closet full of clothes or a pantry full of food, John says it's time to downsize! A mark of true repentance comes by detaching ourselves from earthly possessions and providing for those in need.

Identify a "tunic" of yours and make it available to someone in need.

Be Honest

"Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, 'Teacher, what shall we do?' And he said to them, 'Collect no more than you are authorized to do'" (Luke 3:13-14).

Jesus said that deception is from the devil and not of God (John 8:44). Maybe no one was more despised in the first century than a tax collector. These Jewish citizens, employed by the Roman government, were known to collect more than they were commanded and keep the rest. But a mark of true repentance comes by being honest, leaving behind our desire for material gain.

Do you live with integrity in how you work and deal with others?

Be Happy

"Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what shall we do?' And he said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages'" (Luke 3:14).

Like the Teacher, Jesus lived a simple life without the kinds of "grass is greener" mentality we can develop (Matt. 8:20). Similar to the dishonesty of the tax collectors, these soldiers were also extorting money from the people. John's instruction — be satisfied with what you have! Another mark of true repentance is contentment. No longer pulled by the pursuit of worldly accomplishment, we find true satisfaction through the strength of God (Phil. 4:11-13)!

Spend an entire conversation with God in prayer expressing your gratitude for his provisions.

Conclusion

May we all take John's lessons in repentance to heart, learning to be helpful, honest, and happy as servants of the King today!