

Year B, Week 3

Text: Mark 1:1-8

Idea: John the Baptist Get Ready

Hymn suggestion: O Come All Ye Faithful

Items Needed: John (big “giant” figure?), disciples

We’ve been learning that Advent is a time to get ready for Jesus. The prophet Isaiah told the Israelites to get ready for the savior. Jesus told his disciples to get ready for his return.

Today, we’ll learn about somebody who told people to get ready for Jesus.

We’re going to learn about John the Baptist. He was born just before Jesus was born, and the prophet Isaiah tells us that John was sent as a messenger, to tell people to get ready for Jesus.

In our story today, we find John – now a grown-up, living in the desert.

He was a little bit different:

- He wore scratchy clothes made from camel’s hair
- He ate insects (locusts) and honey
- He lived out in the desert and preached

Lots of people went to the desert to hear John preach. We might expect John to say something to them like, “I’m glad you came! You’re doing just fine.”

Instead, he told them:

- “You need to change your life!”
- “You are heading in the wrong direction – away from God! You need to turn around and go towards God!”
- The church word for “to turn around” like that is “to repent.”
- He said, “If you turn around and confess your sins, God will forgive you.”

But even though he looked sort of strange, and even though he said hard things to them, people still came to hear John. And they did confess and they did repent – and when they did, he would baptize them in the Jordan River.

But he told the people:

- I am just the messenger.
- I am just here to help you get ready for the savior.
- The savior is coming – and he’s so powerful that I’m not worthy to even untie his sandals.
- He told them, “I can baptize you with water – but the savior will baptize you with God’s Holy Spirit.”

Questions without Response:

- I wonder ... why God chose a messenger like John?
- I wonder ... why people came to the desert to listen to him, especially if he told them they'd have to change their lives?
- I wonder ... how we need to change our lives?