

## Lesson 3 . . . Repentance and Divine Sonship Gospel of Matthew

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### **Notes From the Podium**

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**These notes are intended to augment your own reading and study of the lesson.  
Please use as an aid to help document the main message of the lecture.**

### **Matthew 3:1-17**

- I. “In those days...”
  - A. The Holy Family has returned from Egypt and settled in Nazareth.
    - 1. Location of the Roman garrison
    - 2. Mary’s childhood home
    - 3. Generally despised – “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” –Nathaniel
  - B. 20 years have past
  - C. The family life of Jesus remains hidden
- II. John the Baptist
  - A. Jesus is ~30 yrs of age – interestingly the same age one becomes a priest.
  - B. Wilderness of Judea
    - 1. Among beasts
    - 2. A place of full light, the rising sun, intensity, heat, and extreme circumstances
      - a. Same place that the Jews wondered for 40 yrs.
      - b. In the desert, one must be completely dependent on God.
    - 3. People will have to come to him.
      - a. You cannot create a hunger in people for the faith.
        - i. A certain desert must take place first. (suffering, loss, etc...)
        - ii. Then an acknowledgement of the wasteland that is their own soul.
        - iii. Then there will be a thirst and hunger for the living God.
      - b. Comforts lead us to believe that we do not need.
        - i. When comforts are stripped away we realize we are starving.
        - ii. The Season of Lent
- III. “Repent!”
  - A. *Mentanoietei* - to change one’s mind, to have a 2<sup>nd</sup> thought.
  - B. First stage of conversion happens in the intellect.
    - 1. “The greatest punishment for sin is the darkening of the intellect.” –St. Thomas
      - a. The intellect is fractured – we often don’t see correctly.
      - b. We need the light of Revelation
    - 2. “Be transformed by the renewal of your minds, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.” –St. Paul, Romans 12:2
  - C. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand
    - 1. Prophecy returned
    - 2. “The voice of one crying in the wilderness...” Isaiah 40:3, Matt 3:3
- IV. Median Position
  - A. John wore camel’s hair.
    - 1. The camel chewed the cud and had cloven hooves.
    - 2. For the Jew the camel was somewhere between clean and unclean.



## Notes From the Podium (cont)

- B. John, himself is also somewhere in the middle.
  - 1. The bridge between the Old Testament and the new to come.
  - 2. The last of the prophets.
  - 3. He clears the highway for our Lord to come.
    - a. When Christ leaves the temple of the Blessed Virgin Mary and begins to walk to His people, John goes before him.
    - b. John makes straight the path.
    - c. John changes peoples minds – Repentance
- C. Honey and Locust
  - 1. Locust – Plagues of Egypt, a sign of curse and of repentance
  - 2. Honey – A sign of the Promised Land, of blessing, of Divine Love.
    - a. You do not have to work to get honey, it is produced for you.
    - b. You just take and eat.
  - 3. Locust and Honey – bitter and sweet
    - a. These two signs come together here as they would come together in Christ.
    - b. The bitterness of repentance and the sweetness of forgiveness.
    - c. Christ comes to endure both: the bitter and the sweet so that He may then give it to us.
- V. The River Jordan
  - A. 2 Kings 5:1-14
    - 1. Naaman the Syrian questions why he should was in the Jordan to be cured of leprosy.
    - 2. The point is that God will clean him not the water.
  - B. The Jordan is dirty.
    - 1. symbolically laden with sin
    - 2. The sins, as they are confessed are washed down into the water
  - C. Water
    - 1. Often a sign of chaos and of death.
    - 2. God once saved His people by purifying the land with water.
    - 3. Necessary for life but still a dangerous element.
- VI. “You brood of vipers!”
  - A. John speaks to the Pharisees and Sadducees
    - 1. Vipers = offspring of snakes
    - 2. The snake = Satan himself
      - a. Genesis and re-gensis
      - b. What is your pedigree?
    - 3. “who warned you to flee ...”
      - a. Prophecy – the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
      - b. In a forest fire you see snakes slithering out of the forest before you see the smoke.
      - c. The Pharisees and Sadducees are coming out, not for repentance but as if to flee the wrath to come.
    - 4. There is hope.
      - a. “Bear fruit...”
      - b. Your fruit is a sign of your pedigree.
        - i. Don’t presume to say “We have Abraham as our Father”



## Notes From the Podium (cont)

- ii. It is not merely by blood that you can say you are sons of the Father, but by your fruits.
- iii. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
- c. The axe is laid to the root of the tree.
  - i. The roots refer to the genealogy that Matthew has told us about.
  - ii. The tree will be purified from Adam down to us.
  - iii. Radical = to the root
- d. We must bear fruit if we are to be part of this living tree, sprung from the wood of the cross that gives life and bears the fruit of the womb, Jesus Himself.

### VII. "Come after me." – *Opiso mou*

- A. Although John refers to Jesus as "the one who is to come after me", he knows that he is just preparing the way and he gets out of the way.
- B. Humility
  - 1. "...whose sandals I am not worthy to carry"
    - a. The word for sandal is similar to the word for the place where God puts his feet when seated on the Arc of the Covenant.
    - b. The image suggests that now God has laid his feet not on the Arc of the Covenant, but on these sandals.
  - 2. Just as those unworthy to carry the arc of the covenant were killed if they touched it, John acknowledges his unworthiness to even touch the place where God rests His feet.

### VIII. "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." – God is a consuming fire.

#### IX. The Winnowing Fork

- A. Used to separate the chaff from the wheat.
  - 1. The good grain, wheat, is made into bread and sustains life.
  - 2. The chaff just blows away in the wind.
- B. We are the grain.
- C. Christ's winnowing fork is His Word.
- D. The Wind is the Holy Spirit.
- E. All that is substantial and good in us will fall at His feet.
  - 1. He will gather us up
  - 2. Make us into bread
  - 3. Transform us into His own body
- F. All that is not substantial will be blown away like chaff.
  - 1. And because the Holy Spirit is not just wind but also fire, it will be burned up as well.
  - 2. Even that grain that is substantial will also receive fire but it will be baked and will become the Bread of Life.
  - 3. The Saints say the fires of love are the same as the fires of hell.
  - 4. The difference is in the one receiving it.

#### X. Jesus came to John

- A. Our conversion is a response to God's coming to us – a response to Grace.
- B. We love Him because He first loved us.

#### XI. Jesus is baptized.

- A. He descends into the dirty sin-laden waters just like He descended into our humanity.
  - 1. All the sins of the world are symbolized here as being poured over Him.



## ***Notes From the Podium (cont)***

2. He descends not to be purified but to make the waters pure.
- B. Heaven rips open.
  1. "...He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove..."
    - a. A dove is sent from the arc and is a sign that the waters would recede.
    - b. A dove is a sign of sacrifice.
    - c. A dove is a sign of the Holy Spirit.
      - i. The breath between the Father and His Son.
      - ii. Their kiss – *ad oratio*
  2. "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased."