

What Should We Do?

June 16, 2019

Luke 3:10-14

10 And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11 In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

Today's Scripture is from the preaching of John the Baptist. After the birth narratives and Jesus is left behind in the temple when he was a boy, there is the proclamation of John the Baptist. Luke points out a very significant point in the Gospels. John the Baptist is fulfillment of the prophesy of Isaiah. **Isaiah 40:3** A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord." Isaiah tells us in chapter 40 verse 5 the significant purpose of this is so that the glory of the Lord will be revealed. All four of the gospel writers believe and testify that John the Baptist is the forerunner of Christ and fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. Our Scripture for today is in Luke chapter 3 whereupon John is the forerunner of Christ and fulfillment of OT prophecy. John is going throughout the region around the Jordan river. People are coming to him, crowds are coming to him, to be baptized for a specific purpose, for repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

While John is out there preaching repentance and teaching about the forgiveness of sins, people begin to ask him "What should we do?" Notice that John has a receptive audience that is looking for guidance. They are not idle. These people want to hear the word of God. They want to hear the word of John but John is a prophet of God so through John they hear the word of God. After hearing the word they want to take action. These people are not complacent. They ask "What should we do?"

John teaches virtues. The first virtue that John teaches is the virtue sharing. If you have 2 coats then give one to someone who has none. The same thing goes for food or any other commodity. Give your surplus to those who have none. Share God's resources with the needy. This is a very basic stewardship principle. Tax collectors came to be baptized and asked him "What should we do?" John teaches the virtue of honesty. Do not take more than you are supposed to. It was easy for the tax collectors to take advantage of others. John teaches do the right thing, be honest in your dealings with others. Even Roman soldiers asked him "What should we do?" John teaches the virtue of integrity. Do not extort money. Do not make any threats or false accusations. Be satisfied with your wages, in other words, don't be greedy. All of these virtues are matters of honesty, integrity, and righteousness. They teach the basic principle of caring for others.

The Gospel teaches us that along with our baptism comes a change of behavior. This brings us to our contemporary lesson for today. The question for us is, What should we do? Since today is Father's Day I will answer that in a parental perspective. Let's consider our relationship with God as a loving parent. How do you treat God? If you don't come to church it is like not going to visit your father. We discern from the New Testament that the early Christians wanted fellowship with other Christians. They wanted to meet regularly, sing together, pray together, and to share a common meal together. They wanted to be in communion with Lord and to do so is to be in communion with others. Christians have a desire to be in communion with other Christians.

Our faith is based on relationship between you and God, as well as between you and others. Acts 2:42 is very important in understanding the founding principles of the church because in Acts 2:42 we see the church that Jesus built. The Christians devoted themselves - that means they were dedicated and very loyal - to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers. They purposely set aside this time for gathering together. They gathered together to worship, to share the reading, to recall the teaching from the apostles, and to join together, with one another, in fellowship. They saw the importance of being together, with one another, to break bread and to pray. They didn't just come together to have a meal and to say a few prayers, they came together on a specific day - the first day of the week - and they partook of the meal as Jesus taught them.

The question for us is, What should we do? To help answer that I'm going to ask another question. Do I have to go to church to be a Christian? The scriptures teach us that to be Christian requires following the teachings and action of Jesus. Again, this is the church that Jesus built. The Christians devote themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to breaking of bread, and to prayers. We Disciples worship in Spirit and in truth. We follow these founding principles with the New Testament Bible as our doctrine of faith.

Our goal is to please the Lord. Make it your goal to delight the heart of God. Imagine this story is your story. You have a little child that you love dearly. You tie her shoes and give her a hug and she responds by giving you a kiss. She catches you by surprise from time to time by throwing her arms around your leg and squeezes you with all of her strength. Sometimes, out of nowhere, she says "I love you." She delights your heart. That's what we are to do with God. Make it your goal today to delight the heart of God. Visit God's house, worship in spirit and in truth, do it whenever you possibly can, and follow the word of God.