

Preaching Christ...
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God

Date: 14th April 2019
Services: 730, 930 Tewantin
Series: Luke: you can be certain
Title: ... that that Jesus was God's Son whom he loved
Passage: Luke 3:15-38
Outline:

1. Undoing sandals
2. Unpacking baptism
3. Rebranding bad news
4. Identifying Jesus

INTRODUCTION

- Well - Israel Folau's tweet has caused quite a stir this week hasn't it?
- It was **blunt**, it was **bold**, it was **insensitive**...
- It could have been **kinder**... more **caring**...
- It might have been said **better** and **clearer**...
- In fact it was probably better not said at all!
- but it was **true!** //
- and although most people saw it as anti-**gay**... and as targeting the homosexual community...
- ...it was actually **indiscriminate**... and its target **wide** enough to include **me**...
- **Drunks, homosexuals, adulterers, liars, fornicators, thieves, atheists, idolaters**...
- I qualify for **4** out of the **8** categories... that's 1/2 !
- I read a great piece of satire during the week written in response... purporting to be from a spokesperson from the **lying community** saying how upset they were that this tweet was **unsettling** lairs who were only just starting to **test** out their **lying capabilities**...
- But there's the thing: Israel Folau's comments are as **blunt** and **bold** and **insensitive** as John the **Baptist's** comments we explored last **week!**
- *"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ... he starts his sermon as people come way out into the desert to hear what he has to say...*
- *"Produce fruit in keeping with repentance" he says... and then adds that if you're **not** showing in your life the radical nature of repentance - that is - turning your life from living for **self** to living for **God** - then - *The axe is already at the **root** of the **trees**, and every tree that does not produce **good** fruit will be cut down and thrown into the **fire**.**
- Now if John the Baptist were playing **rugby**, he'd have his **contract ripped up**...!
- He makes us feel **uncomfortable**...
- And we ask - why are such stark things **written** in the Bible??
- Why can't the Bible be **nicer? Softer? Gentler?** //
- These things are good indications that this is not **made up** don't you think? Because if you were making up a new religion to kind of piggy back on the back of Judaism... you wouldn't have your very first **preacher** be so **insensitive!** /

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- So as we take a second look at John the Baptist this morning and see the transition from the preparatory work of **John** to Jesus himself taking **up** his **ministry**, I want to explore with you four areas of this passage:

1. **Undoing sandals**
2. **Unpacking baptism**
3. **Rebranding bad news**
4. **Identifying Jesus**

- first

1. UNDOING SANDALS

- It was because John has spoken so **boldly** and with significant **authority** that you'll see in v15 – have a look with me – that people were wondering whether **John** might be the **Messiah**...
- You'll remember that people at the time were **looking** for him
- There had been **generations** of people waiting for the Messiah...
- A little bit like **we** wait for his **return**!
- People were saying – “do you think he'll come in our life time...”
- Any way – John caused such a **stir** – he drew such a **crowd** – and people were queuing up to be baptised by him that some were saying – **this must be him...!**
- In **John's** gospel we read that the religious leaders even sent a deputation down from Jerusalem to ask who he **was**...
- ...and he consistently said '**I am not the Messiah**'... I'm just a **voice** preparing the way
- And some who knew their Bibles may have remembered – ah yes – there **will** be one who comes **before** the Messiah to **prepare** the way
- Luke reports here **John's** perspective on where he fits in the scheme of things...
- ...and how **different** is this to people who like to talk themselves **up**... // perhaps that is **you** sometimes – or **has** been you – you portray yourself as being more **able** than you really are – more **important** – more **significant**... that's the way of the modern CV isn't it – to over-sell yourself? /
- Well John didn't play that game at all... he went the **opposite** way... he talks himself **down**...
- I'm only a **voice**... that's all..
- ..and the one who is to **come** – **way** more powerful than I and in fact – I am not worthy to untie his **sandals**...
- In the culture of the day – undoing someone's sandals is not usually something even the lowliest **servant** was asked to do... they would wash your feet... but actually untying the sandal... people would do for **themselves**...
- Do you see what John is saying...? I'm not even worthy to **start** at the point of the stuff slaves **won't do!** Undoing the Messiah's **sandals** – an honour too **great** for **John**...
- **John** gets the significance of the one who is to **come** – and his role in **preparing** the way....
- The one the religious leaders would **immediately** plot to kill, the one they would **spit** on, and **beat** up, and hung up to **die**... John said – *I'm not worthy even to untie his sandals*...
- The one whom **today** – people take his name in **vain**... and seek to banish him from being talked about **publicly** – whose **teaching** forms the fabric of our **laws** – but he must be banished from our **schools**... **this** one – **this** is the one whose sandals neither **you** or **I** am worthy to **untie**...!

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- Do you hold Jesus in such high **esteem**? – by the way you **talk** about him – the way you **live** for him – **prioritise** him – **honour** him – **worship** him? //
- Well – that’s about untying sandals... / but I also want to talk about -

2. UNPACKING BAPTISM

- John elevates the Messiah not only by telling us he would be **unworthy** to untie his **sandals**... but also pointing out that the **Messiah’s** baptism, when he comes, will be of an entirely **different** order.
- Let’s have a look – v16 - *“I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire”*
- Now you remember that John’s baptism was **itself** an **insult** to **Jews**... though Jews in the end were lining up for it... but it was **insult** because **that** baptism had been for **Gentiles** who wanted to **identity** with **Jews**...
- As Luke had told us – it was a baptism of **repentance** for the **forgiveness** of sins...
- so when you turned from living a life where **you’re** in charge, to a life where **God** is in charge, the water baptism symbolised a **break** with the past and the new start marked by **forgiveness**...
- It was a **very significant** moment... and crowds **wanted** it, in **response** to John’s **preaching**.
- But **Jesus’** baptism... didn’t **involve** water.
- It involved the **Holy Spirit** and **fire**.
- Now that’s a strange thought for us because we so strongly associate baptism with water – whether it’s a **little** or a **lot**...
- But the word ‘**baptism**’ means to ‘dip’ or ‘immerse’ and can be used **metaphorically**... Jesus challenged James and John in Mark 10 when they asked sit at Jesus’ left and right in his kingdom... *can you be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with?* – in other words – can you be **immersed** – are you willing to be **immersed** into the **suffering** I will **suffer**...
- John says that **Jesus’** baptism will **immerse** people **with** or **into** the **Holy Spirit** and **fire**...
- That is, when you come into relationship with Jesus, he will **immerse** you with his **Holy Spirit** and with **fire** – to **change** you, **purify** you, **transform** you and **remake** you in his **image**... /
- What does this have to do with **water baptism** today?
- Simply – yet **profoundly** this – the two baptisms **merge** if you like, so that **water** baptism for **repentance** and **forgiveness**... is an **outward** sign of the **inward** baptism of the **Holy Spirit** and **fire**.
- **Water** baptism is an **external** expression of an **inward** reality.
- Sometimes people will ask me if I’ve been baptised with the **Holy Spirit**. I will always answer ‘**yes**’ for it would not be possible for me to call Jesus ‘**Lord**’ and live **one** day for him if I had **not**!! //
- **All** true and real believers in the Lord Jesus – who have come into a relationship of **love** and **service** and **trust**, and now **live** for **him** – have been baptised with the **Holy Spirit** and **fire** – and the **Holy Spirit** and **fire** are **daily** working in the life of the believer to continually **purify** and **refine**... and **strengthen** to be about **God’s** work!
- But let me say this – if you are a **new** Christian but have not **yet been** baptised... then we should talk... so that we can share **together** in the **outward** and **visible sign** of God’s **inward** and **invisible** grace...
- ...but that leads me to a question for you...

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- Because John goes on in v17 – have a look – to say that the Messiah’s *winnowing* fork is in his hand to clear his *threshing* floor and to gather up the *wheat* into his *barn*, but he will burn up the *chaff* with the *unquenchable* fire...
- True believers he will gather to himself... while people **without** repentance – will be **gone**....
- Now that doesn’t sound very **nice** – but note the next verse – **v18** – and with many **other** words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the **good news** to them...
- so why is this stuff about chaff and fire called **GOOD NEWS?** – so my **third** point – what is this...

3. REBRANDING BAD NEWS?

- How can he say the Messiah is about gathering **wheat** into his **barn** but throwing **chaff** into a **fire** and say he was proclaiming **good news**?
- the same point made back in v9 where the axe he says is poised, and **fruitless** trees cut down and thrown into the **fire**.
- We want to say ‘**stop it John**’ – you’re not doing the cause any **good** with such **negative** talk! //
- Many of us grew up in the church which seemed to be based on scaring the **hell** out of **people** – where people turned up to **church** and tried their best to do a bucket full of **good** things, scared stiff that if they **didn’t**, they’d go to **hell**...
- Surely we’re **over** that...
- Well – I think we **are**... and if you grew going to church and doing good **only** because you were scared **stiff** of doing anything **else** – I’m so **sorry**... that’s a **terrible** way to **live**!
- You know what I call **that**?
- **Religion**.
- And **religion** has a lot to answer for.
- So, let me ask you this:
- Are **warning** signs, **bad** news or **good** news?
- “don’t swim outside the flags”... **bad** news or **good** news?
- **Steep cliff ahead** – **bad** news or **good** news?
- Caution **sharks** – **bad** news or **good** news?
- Probably depends a little on whether you’re a glass **half-empty** or a ‘glass **half-full**’ type of person!
- You could say – Oh darn – I can’t **swim** here – or you could say ‘thank **goodness** I was **warned**!’
- You could say – **darn** – I wanted to get closer to the cliff so I can see the **view** – or ‘wow – look at the view from **here** – where I’m **safe**’
- And what if told you that in each case I’d left something **off** the sign...
- Don’t swim outside the flags... **patrolled beach 200m south**
- Steep cliff ahead – **fenced lookout 50m**
- Caution **sharks** – shark nets – **150m**
- You can probably see where I’m **going**...
- John the Baptist says – you **bunch** of **snakes**... but then tells people what repentance looks like – and baptises those who repent as a sign of their forgiveness...

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- The Messiah has a **winnowing** fork... **yes...** but for those who repent, he has a baptism of the **Holy Spirit and of fire!**
- The **good** news only makes sense on the back of the **bad** news! You can't remove **judgement** when you preach the **good news!**
- Israel Falou says all these people are going to **hell** – but wait there's **more** – if you **repent** – Jesus **saves!!**
- ... and **that** friends, is **good** news – **great** news!!
- It is not so much that Luke has **rebranded** bad news as **good** news... / it is that Luke sees the **bad** news as the necessary **background** to the good news – the **glorious** news that for those who **repent**, there is full and free **forgiveness** through the **Lord Jesus!**
- I want to ask you **again** this morning – **have you repented?**
- Have you **responded** to the good news... the good news which consists both in the **warning** and the wonderful **solution**... the warning that pushing God out won't end **well**... but the wonderful **solution** that if and when you **stop** pushing God out and turn to him **surrender** and **trust** – **forgiveness** will be **yours!**
- Well **finally** – and I fear, all too **briefly**...

4. IDENTIFYING JESUS

- If John's baptism was a baptism marking out both **repentance** and **forgiveness**, why on earth was Jesus standing in **line** for this?
- Presumably John had baptised a **few** that day... and Jesus is **next** in line... v21 – it could hardly be more brief if Luke tried... *Jesus was baptised too!*
- **John's gospel** doesn't specifically **tell** us he was baptised, Mark is as **brief** as **Luke** and **Matthew** tells us that John tried to **deter** Jesus so that **he** might be baptised by **him!**
- We did touch on this a couple of weeks ago when we looked at Jesus undergoing the purification rites in the temple... do you we **recall?**
- We said then that it was part of Jesus' **identifying** with us...
- He came to enter our **world**... our **experience** – our **life**... to come along **side** us at every point... and so he **identifies** with us through his **baptism**... **I'm standing with you!**
- But **Luke's** emphasis here is not on him **identifying WITH** us, but on **identifying Jesus** as God's **Son**...
- v21b – have a look with me – *And as [Jesus] was praying, the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased".*
- Remember what Luke wrote as he began? He's put this together so we can **certain** about Jesus
- You can be **certain** that in terms of something you could **see** that day – AND **hear** that day – that Jesus was **publicly** and **powerfully** identified as God's **Son**.
- He was **unlike** all the others who had lined up for baptism that day...
- as the thief later on the cross would say *'this man has done nothing wrong'*
- what have we seen in our Luke series since the start of Feb?
- The angel to Zechariah – that John would prepare people for the **Lord**
- The angel to Mary – that the son conceived in her miraculously would be the **Son** of the **Most high**

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- **Elizabeth** – filled with the Holy Spirit confirms Mary as the mother of her **Lord**
- **Mary** in her song – that in Jesus – God’s promises way back to **Abraham** were being fulfilled
- **Zechariah** in his song – that the birth of John, marked God stepping in to **redeem his people**
- Then **Simeon** in his song – holding the boy **Jesus** – my eyes have seen your **salvation...**
- And now – in case there was **any** doubt so far... the descended **dove** and the **voice** as clear as crystal... **this is my Son...**
- ...wonderfully then affirmed in the genealogy that unfolds... ending as it does in v 38 – **the son of Seth, the Son of Adam, the Son of God...**
- **Luke** wants you to know this morning... that the **man Jesus Christ** is **God the Son...**
- not just for your **information** so you can say – my – that’s very interesting **Mark**, thanks for pointing that out...
- but for your **transformation** – that you might **bow** before him... and **worship** and **adore** him – and **live** for him and that your **transformed life** may point **others** to **him** and to the **forgiveness** he holds out to **everyone...**!

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- Jesus’ **sandals**? Unworthy to **untie** – does your whole life bow before him?
 - Jesus’ **baptism**? With the **Holy Spirit and fire** – allow the **HS** and his **fire...** to **continue** to **transform** you!
 - **Bad** news or **good** news? The **good** news only makes sense on the back of the **bad** news... have you **so** understood the **bad** news... that you have **run** to and taken **hold** of the **good** news?
 - **Identifying** Jesus? – Jesus who identified with us through and through... and Jesus who on this **amazing day** – was clearly **identified** to us as God’s **Son** whom he **loved...** lest you be in any **doubt** this **morning...** and so you **embrace** him and **love** him and **live** for him... all the **more!**