

Cheltenham
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LIFE LESSONS FROM A COUNTRY BOY

Message Notes

Text: Luke 3:1-18

John the Baptist was a country boy. He was born in southern Judea, about six months before Jesus was born. He spent his childhood and youth in the hill country...

Lesson 1. God often does things in an unexpected way

According to Matthew's Gospel John dressed like the prophet Elijah with clothes made of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist (Matthew 3:4; 2 Kings 1:8). His diet included locusts and wild honey – the food of the very poor...

Leviticus 11:20-23, "All flying insects that walk on all fours are to be regarded as unclean by you. There are, however, some flying insects that walk on all fours that you may eat: those that have jointed legs for hopping on the ground. Of these you may eat any kind of locust, cricket or grasshopper."

He was Nazirite, which meant he couldn't cut his hair. So he looked and acted in an unusual way and yet he was God's man...

Jesus told us that He would appear in unexpected ways. In Matthew 25 He spoke of those who were hungry or thirsty, or who needed clothes or hospitality, people who need care when they're sick or a visit in prison. And He said, *"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*

God often does things in an unexpected way – He often turns up in a manner we don't foresee!

When John was asked who he was he quoted from Isaiah the prophet. He said, I'm *"A voice of one calling in the desert..."* Isaiah 40:3 in context refers to a new Exodus in order to set people free from oppression...

A Daily Jewish prayer asked that God's kingdom or rule would be established over all people of the earth. The Jewish people were thus expecting a new exodus, for God to set them free from Roman rule, but Jesus answered the prayer in a way they didn't expect...

God often does things in an unexpected way

Lesson 2. Everyone has to come to God on the same terms

Luke 3:8, *"do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham."*

John's word play in Aramaic (stones: abnayya; children: benayya)

People who were born Jewish and didn't reject the Law considered themselves to be automatically saved. Repentance and baptism were only considered necessary for Gentiles who wanted to convert to Judaism. But here John tells his Jewish audience that salvation has nothing to do with their nationality...

Everyone has to come to God on the same terms

But I was born in a Christian country
But I was born in a Christian family
But I'm a good person; I don't do anything REALLY bad
But I give to charity
But I'm a ... (fill in the blank of a denomination)
But I go to church
But my great grandfather's best friend's uncle's wife had a sister who was married to a Bishop...

Everyone has to come to God on the same terms

Lesson 3. Significant change takes place in community

When John the Baptist was born his parents were very old and so it's likely they died when he was young. It seems that a community of people in the desert raised John. So when he began his ministry he came from that community and started talking to people about their community responsibility...

Luke 3:4-6, *"Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all people will see God's salvation."*

- Confess your sins
- Repent – turn from doing what’s wrong and prove the genuineness of your repentance by doing what’s right
- Be baptized

By doing these things we prepare the way for The Lord. We make straight paths for him. We straighten crooked habits and smooth out rough ways. And then we will see God’s salvation flowing through our lives and our communities...

And the number one sin that John pinpoints is people’s preoccupation with money – the spirit of mammon...

Luke 3:7-14
