

“Bear Fruits in Keeping with Repentance” (Luke 3:1–20)

January 14, 2018

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Have you ever seen a commercial on television and realized that you had a problem that you never knew you had? A lot of products are designed to solve a particular problem that we have. When you watch commercials, they usually illustrate that problem, and then they give us great news: there’s a product that can fix your problem. Sometimes the problems aren’t really big. Do you remember those Ronco products that were sold on TV? Ron Popeil hawked all kinds of products on TV. You may remember the rotisserie machine that could cook two chickens at once. He also sold the Inside-the-Shell Egg Scrambler. Until you saw this product, you may not have realized how difficult it is to scramble eggs with a whisk. But with the Inside-the-Shell Egg Scrambler, you simply place a whole egg on the device, a needle sticks inside the egg, and the electronic device scrambles the egg’s yolk and white inside the shell. No more whisks needed!

Remember the Clapper? Before you saw that product advertised on TV, you probably didn’t think about how much time you spent turning lights off and on. But now, with the Clapper, you just clap to do the job. Just think what you can do with all of that time saved!

On a more serious note, sometimes we don’t realize we have a health problem. Perhaps we’re feeling fine, but we happen to have our annual physical and the blood tests reveal that our cholesterol or our blood pressure is too high. Perhaps something else is going on with our blood sugar levels or our white blood cell count. There may be some proteins in our blood that could be markers of a tumor. We didn’t think we had a problem, but now the doctor says we do.

The point is that in order to make changes, in order to find a solution, we first have to know we have a problem. In order to be healed, we need to know what disease we have. We first have to be confronted with the truth in order to be made well.

That can be true of all kinds of things in life. If we want to get better, we have to be confronted with the truth. I used to be a professor of music. Most of the time, I taught voice lessons. Most of the students accepted the fact that it was my job to get them to sing better. But I remember there was one student who seemed to be upset that I didn’t simply let him sing and then say to him how great of a singer he was. I wanted him to improve, so I challenged him. His voice was very soft, and to be an effective singer, you have to be able to project your voice. You need a certain level of volume in order to have a rich, resonant, pleasing voice. So, I corrected

him and taught him some new techniques. I usually had good student evaluation, but he gave me a negative one. (Evaluations were anonymous, but I could identify his evaluation by the comments he made.)

In order to change, to improve, to be made well, we need to know what our problem is. And we need to be confronted with the truth. This is never easy. And, to quote that line Jack Nicholson delivers in “A Few Good Men,” there are many people who “can’t handle the truth.”

That’s certainly true when it comes to Jesus. In order to know that we need Jesus, we first need to know that we have a problem that only he can solve. That means that we will need to hear some hard truths. Some people will respond rightly to those hard truths. Others “can’t handle the truth,” and they will be dismissive.

We see this today in today’s passage, Luke 3:1–20. In the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we were told the story of how a special child was born to two elderly parents who were previously unable to have children. This special child was named John. His father, Zechariah, was told that John “will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared” (Luke 1:16–17).¹

When John was born, Zechariah said this to him,

⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,
⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high
⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:76–79).

John’s job would be to go prepare the way for the Lord Jesus, who was his relative and was born a few months after John. John’s role was to prepare the people for the coming of their King and Savior. He would let them know that the salvation of God has come.

Now, we jump ahead three decades later. Jesus hasn’t begun his ministry yet, but John was ministering in the wilderness near the Jordan River. Let’s first read verses 1–6:

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

¹ In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³ And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.
⁵ Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall become straight,
and the rough places shall become level ways,
⁶ and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

Once again, Luke gives us some historical context. He tells us that this is the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (42 BC–37 AD). Tiberius was the emperor of Rome, who followed Augustus, his stepfather. He started to reign alongside Augustus in AD 12 and then he became the sole emperor in AD 14. Depending on how the years were counted, this could be as early as AD 26 and as late as AD 29. I think it’s possible that it’s now AD 28, particularly if Jesus died in AD 30. But some think he died in AD 33, and then the year 29 might make sense. At any rate, this is during Tiberius’s reign.

It’s also when Pontius Pilate was the governor, or prefect, of Judea. He held that position from AD 26 to 36. He was an administrative officer of the Roman Empire whose job it was to collect taxes and keep the peace.

Three other political leaders are mentioned: Herod Antipas (ruled 4 BC–AD 39), his half-brother, Philip (ruled 4 BC–AD 34), and Lysanias (dates unknown). This Herod is not Herod the Great, but his son. He was the one who ruled over Galilee, the region where Jesus ministered. He was also famous for divorcing his wife and marrying the wife of his half-brother, Herod Philip (not be confused with Herod the Tetrarch). John the Baptist spoke out against that marriage and that led to his death. Philip and Lysanias are not as important, but they were both “tetrarchs,” which means they were each a ruler of a fourth of Herod the Great’s kingdom.

In addition to the political rulers, there are the religious leaders, Annas and Caiaphas. Caiaphas was the high priest of the time (he held that position from AD 18–36). His father-in-

law, Annas, had been high priest earlier (AD 6–15). Though he was no longer officially the high priest, it's clear that he still had a lot of power (John 18:13, 24; Acts 4:6).

I think Luke tells us who these powerful men were in order to tell us when this event occurred. But he also tells us about these men because he contrasts John the Baptist with them. These men had political and religious power. In fact, four of them (Pontius Pilate, Herod Antipas, Annas, and Caiaphas) will play a role in Jesus' death. Yet John the Baptist didn't have any earthly power. But what John had was more important: The word of God. John is presented as a prophet.² He delivers a message from God in the wilderness along the Jordan River. He is not in the palaces of Rome, Jerusalem, or Caesarea Philippi. He's not in the temple in Jerusalem. But his job is more important than Caesar's or the high priest's. His job was to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. Nothing could get in the way of what God was about to do. Not the lowest valley, the highest mountain, the most crooked of roads, or the roughest patch of terrain. No, all flesh will see the salvation of God.

To prepare people for the coming of the Lord, John preached "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Baptism is the act of being immersed in water. In this case, it was the Jordan River. Repentance is a turning to God, a turning away from sin, a changing of mind and heart and behavior. What John was saying was that it was necessary to be washed from the uncleanness of sin and to turn to God in faith and to turn way from sin and idols.

The idea of needing to be washed is found in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 1:16–17, God says to Israel,

- ¹⁶ Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,
¹⁷ learn to do good;
seek justice,
correct oppression;
bring justice to the fatherless,
plead the widow's cause.

The idea of being washed in the Jordan River also reminds me of a story from the Old Testament. A Gentile, named Naaman, was the commander of the Syrian army. He also

² It was typical for Old Testament prophets to be identified by the names of their fathers, the kings who reigned when they prophesied, and the fact that the "word of the Lord" came to them: Jer. 1:1–2; 11:18–20; 13:3; Isa. 38:4; Hos. 1:1.

happened to be a leper. He was told that the prophet Elisha could heal him. When he came to Elisha, Elisha told him to dip himself seven times in the Jordan River and he would be clean. Naaman was doubtful at first, but he did as he was told, and he was healed of his leprosy (2 Kgs. 5:1–14).

The idea is that the Israelites were unclean. They needed to be clean in order to be prepared for the Lord's coming. Like everyone else, they had sinned against God. In order to be right with God, they needed to repent and be forgiven. Our great problem, our great disease is the separation that exists between God and people. That separation is responsible for all that is wrong with the world. Because of that separation, we have inner turmoil. We don't feel at ease, we don't feel peace, we don't truly feel home. We can get depressed and lonely. Because of that separation, we fight. We covet and steal. We quarrel. Nations go to war. Because of that separation, God put a curse on the earth. There are earthquakes and floods, hurricanes and famines. And because of this separation, we get diseases like leprosy and leukemia, and we die. We're separated from God because we don't live according to our design. God made us to know him, love him, and worship him. But we don't pursue God, we don't love him as we should, and we don't worship him. We tend to make ourselves or other created things the objects of our worship, even if we don't call it "worship" or think of it as worship. This disease of sin affects all flesh, and it affected Israel just as much as it affected Gentiles.

Luke quotes Isaiah 40:3–5, identifying John as the voice in the wilderness. Another passage in Isaiah talks about preparing the way. Those who are lowly and contrite will be healed, but those who continue in their wickedness will not experience healing or peace. This is what Isaiah 57:14–21 says:

- ¹⁴ And it shall be said,
"Build up, build up, prepare the way,
remove every obstruction from my people's way."
¹⁵ For thus says the One who is high and lifted up,
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
"I dwell in the high and holy place,
and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly,
and to revive the heart of the contrite."
¹⁶ For I will not contend forever,
nor will I always be angry;
for the spirit would grow faint before me,
and the breath of life that I made.

- 17 Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry,
I struck him; I hid my face and was angry,
but he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart.
- 18 I have seen his ways, but I will heal him;
I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners,
19 creating the fruit of the lips.
Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,” says the LORD,
“and I will heal him.
- 20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea;
for it cannot be quiet,
and its waters toss up mire and dirt.
- 21 There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”

John’s message was the same. Healing would come to those who sought it. But there are those, the wicked, who will never seek God, and they will not experience peace.

Let’s continue in this passage to learn more about John’s message. Let’s read verses 7–9:

⁷ He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” ⁸ Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ⁹ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

John calls the crowds a “brood of vipers!” In Matthew’s Gospel, we’re told that he directed that statement to two sects of Jewish religious leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 3:7). “Brood of vipers” more or less means, “sons of the serpent,” or, “sons of the devil.” The imagery goes back to Genesis 3, when Satan, in the form of a serpent, tempts and Adam and Eve. John asks them, “Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” He probably implies that they can’t slither out of God’s righteous judgment. The only way for them to avoid God’s wrath is to “bear fruits in keeping with repentance.” In other words, if their lives show that they have turned to God, then they can avoid his wrath. But they shouldn’t think they will be spared God’s judgment just because they’re Jews. They can’t take pride in their heritage and say that they are sons of Abraham. The true sons of Abraham are people of faith (Gal. 3:7, 9), people who are united to Jesus (Gal. 3:29) by faith. If all the Jews lacked faith and didn’t repent of their sins, then God could take stones and make them sons of Abraham. People of faith produce good fruit and will be spared, and people who lack faith bear bad fruit and will be judged.

This is similar to what happens in the Gospel of John when Jesus confronts Jewish religious leaders. He says to them, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you

will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31–32). They say that they are Abraham’s sons and have never been slaves. How can they be made free? Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave of sin. . . . I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you” (John 8:34, 37). When they insist that they are Abraham’s children, Jesus says that if they were Abraham’s children, they would be doing the works of Abraham. I think he means they would be acting out of faith, and if they truly loved God the Father, they would love God the Son, Jesus. But they don’t understand Jesus, because they cannot bear to hear what he says (John 8:39–43). Then Jesus brings out the big guns and says, “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

In other words, Jesus calls the unbelieving Jewish religious leaders of his day a “brood of vipers.” They weren’t sons of Abraham and sons of God. No, they were sons of the devil. This shows us that God’s people are not of one ethnicity. It doesn’t matter whether you are Jewish or Gentile. People aren’t right with God because they have some position or power. They’re not right with God because they happened to go through the religious motions. No, they are right with God if they have been transformed, if God has changed them. As the apostle Paul says, “For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation” (Gal. 6:15). You can’t boast in following all the religious rules, or flouting all the religious rules. What matters is being transformed by God, born of the Holy Spirit.

I think it’s no accident that John is in the wilderness and at the Jordan River. Remember that when God redeemed Israel out of slavery in Egypt, he brought them into the wilderness. And to enter into the Promised Land of Canaan, they had to cross the Jordan River. Though they entered into that land, they did not find rest for their souls (Heb. 3:1–4:10). Because the Israelites were generally unfaithful to God, God punished them and drove them out of that land. But when they reentered it, they still hadn’t fixed their problem of sin. The answer wasn’t entering into that land. The answer was a transformation. And that’s why John is here, in the wilderness, at the Jordan River. He’s saying, “If you want to enter the true Promised Land, the true paradise with God, you have to go through the Jordan. You have to be washed of your sin. You have to

change. You must turn from you sin and turn back to God. You must trust him and you must live like it.”

Some people who heard John’s message were convicted. They realized that they had a problem and they wanted to know what they could do to prepare for the coming of the Lord.

Let’s read verses 10–14:

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?” ¹¹ And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” ¹² Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” ¹³ And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.” ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”

When people ask John, “What should we do?” John gives them a pretty simple answer: start living rightly. The implication is they haven’t been living this way. They’re supposed to share their clothing. If you see someone who lacks the basic necessities of life, share with that person. Stop taking things that aren’t yours. Tax collectors in that time and place were known for taking more than they should. Apparently, soldiers did the same thing. John tells the crowd to live rightly, to be generous and honest.

Now, this doesn’t mean that this makes a person right with God. We have to remember that John’s message was not the full gospel. He was preparing people for Jesus. What he was doing was highlighting their sin and their need for salvation. He was telling them to start to pay attention to their dealings with other people, to be aware of their own unrighteousness and to start thinking more about righteousness.

Jesus will say that God freely forgives those who turn to him in faith. But Jesus will also stress the importance of sacrificial giving. Later in the Gospel of Luke, we’ll see examples of people giving generously. Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan is a story of a man who gives generously to someone in need. We’ll also see a story of a tax collector, Zacchaeus, who repents (Luke 19:1–10). And we’ll meet an honorable soldier, a centurion (Luke 7:1–10). In this passage, Luke is introducing some important themes that will be developed later.

John the Baptist’s preaching pointed forward to the one who can make sinful people righteous. Let’s read verses 15–17:

¹⁵ As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, ¹⁶ John answered them all,

saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

John’s preaching was so powerful that some people wondered if he was the Christ, or Messiah, the long-awaited deliverer that the Old Testament promised would come. He clearly says no. He says that while his baptism was with water, there was one who is mightier than he. This one, Jesus, will baptize not with water, but with the Holy Spirit and fire. Water in and of itself does nothing to change a person. Baptism in water is just a sign. But the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the triune God. After Jesus dies, is resurrected from the grave, and ascends into heaven, he will pour out the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit is the one who ultimately transforms people. Fire can also change. Fire can destroy, but fire can also purify. For some, fire will mean judgment. Those who reject Jesus are the trees who produce bad fruit, and they will be thrown into the fire. But those who trust in Jesus will be purified. God uses the fire of trials to purify his people (Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2–3). He uses challenges in our lives to burn off the things that hinder our growth, to show us what is important and enduring and what won’t last. We should focus on the things that matter most, the things that are eternal.

Jesus is like a farmer who separates the wheat from the chaff. The chaff is the husk, which isn’t used for food and so is discarded. A farmer would use a winnowing fork to toss the grain in the air. The lighter chaff would be carried off in the wind and the heavier wheat would fall back to the threshing floor. The chaff would later be burned, while the wheat is stored in the barn. This is just a picture of judgment day. When Jesus returns, when the end of history as we know it comes, he will judge everyone who has ever lived. John preached this, but so did Jesus and his apostles. The idea that our lives will be evaluated means that our lives have meaning. If there is no evaluation, there simply is no meaning. But the fact that we will be judged should cause us to think more carefully about our lives. If all our actions, our words, and even our thoughts are used as evidence in the cosmic trial that is judgment day, could we stand in the right before God? Would we be found guilty or innocent? John is pressing the need that people have for salvation. He is preparing people for the only Savior.

At the end of this passage, Luke gives us a summary statement of John’s preaching. But Luke also tells us that John’s preaching got him into trouble. Let’s read verses 18–20:

¹⁸ So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. ¹⁹ But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰ added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

John preached “good news” to people. His message relates to the good news that the prophet Isaiah promised would come. Isaiah promised that God would come and gather his people (Isa. 40:9–11). He promised that God would bring peace (Isa. 52:7; the peace comes from the “Suffering Servant” of Isa. 52:13–53:12). God's anointed one would bring good news to the spiritually poor, the ones enslaved to sin (Isa. 61:1). Isaiah promises forgiveness, restoration, and even a recreation of the world (Isa. 65:17).

But not everyone thought John's preaching was good news. Herod Antipas, who had divorced his wife in order to marry the wife of his half-brother, didn't like John's preaching, and he locked him up. John had told Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have her” (Matt. 14:4). And so John was imprisoned and later he was killed (see Matt. 14:1–12). John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah, the Old Testament prophet who told people to stop worshiping idols, false gods, and to turn back to the true God. He spoke truth to power. In Elijah's day, the power was King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Elijah had to run for his life. John also spoke truth to power, but for this he was killed.

Hundreds of millions of people and perhaps billions of people have heard about John the Baptist. How many of us know much about Tiberius or Philip the Tetrarch? We only know Pontius Pilate because he was involved in the crucifixion. These men are mere footnotes in the Bible. But John is a hero. That is because John the Baptist had real power. God's hand was upon him, and he had the power of God's word. Though his actions cost him his life, he knew that he could never lose eternal life in the true Promised Land of a renewed and restored creation. His glory far exceeds that of the emperor.

Now that we've gone through this passage, I want to focus on just a few points.

One, true power is found in God's word. God's word has the power to transform lives. When the Holy Spirit applies his word to the hearts of sinful people, those people turn to God. They are changed. The word of God has changed the world more than any emperor has. People often put so much hope in politics. They pour so much of their time, money, and emotions into political parties. But politics does not have the power of God. It's important, but it's less important than God's word.

John the Baptist's preaching challenged not only political powers, but also religious powers. His preaching—and Jesus' preaching—challenged the Pharisees and Sadducees. They challenged the high priests. Some people put their hope in their priests, or in religious institutions. Formalized religion is not necessarily bad, but if it is opposed to the word of God, it is. When churches do things that aren't biblical, they need to be reformed. If they don't change according to God's word, they, too, will be thrown into the fire, which will consume all their unbiblical traditions.

Two, God's word tells us that our problem is our rebellion against God. Our main problem is not a lack of education or money. Our main problem isn't political. Our main problem isn't even racism or sexism. Our main problem is that we do not live for God the way that we should. And God has every right to condemn us. John's preaching highlighted that fact.

Three, John's job was also to point to the solution to our problem. Our problem is so great that we cannot fix it ourselves. We cannot atone for our own sin. That is why God sent his Son, Jesus. Jesus is the only perfectly righteous person who has ever lived. He has always loved God the Father the way that God should be loved. He has always obeyed God the Father the way that God should be obeyed. He loves people the way that people should be loved. And though he never sinned, he was treated like a criminal and executed on an instrument of torture, the cross. Yet this was God's plan. On the cross, Jesus experienced God's righteous, holy wrath. God hates sin, and Jesus was regarded as sin. He was crushed, because sin deserves to be destroyed. He experienced hell on earth, because sinners deserve to experience condemnation. And the great news is that anyone who turns to Jesus in faith and repents of their sins can be forgiven of all their sin. Jesus has already paid the penalty that our crimes against God deserve.

Four, that brings us to what a right response to Jesus looks like. We must trust Jesus. We must believe that he is who the Bible says he is and that he did what the Bible says he did. But faith isn't just head knowledge. Faith leads to action. Repentance is the changing of one's whole life. If a right response is a coin, faith is on one side, and repentance is on the other. You can't separate the two. Jesus and his apostles called people to put their faith in Jesus, but they also called them to repentance (Luke 5:32; 13:1–5; 15; 17:1–4; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). If you haven't yet turned to Jesus, you can turn to him now. It's not too late. You can put your trust in him. You can start living a different way. I would love to talk to

you more about that. But keep in mind that following Jesus is a real change. It's one we need to make in order to be right with God and avoid judgment.

Five, repentance isn't just what we do when we first come to Jesus. The whole Christian life is a continual repentance, a continual reformation according to the word of God. I talked a lot about Martin Luther last fall. In his famous *Ninety-Five Theses*, which was a protest against the Catholic Church's abuse of the sale of indulgences, he began with this thesis: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to repentance."³ Many of us have put our faith in Jesus. How many of us are repenting even now?

Finally, I want to close with this thought: John the Baptist said that God could raise up stones to be Abraham's children. And God has done that. In the apostle Peter's first letter, he says that Jesus is "a living stone," the "cornerstone" upon which the church is built (1 Pet. 2:4, 7). And Christians are "like living stones" who are "built up as a spiritual house" (1 Pet. 2:5). We were once spiritually dead, but we have been made alive, adopted as God's children, and incorporated into God's temple, the church. Peter says,

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (1 Pet. 2:9–10).

Praise God that he can raise up stones to be alive, to be his own possession, to walk in his light, and to receive his mercy. And let us continually turn from sin to God, living lives that are pleasing to him.

³ Eric Metaxas, *Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World* (New York: Viking, 2017), 115.