What should we do?

Luke 3.7-18

John challenges the crowds that their faith needs to make a difference to the way they live their lives. They ask John what they should do to become better people, and John shares with them how their actions need to demonstrate how they have had a change of heart. John speaks directly to each group of people, giving them a practical way they can live differently because of their faith.

Now read **Luke 3.7-18** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

The lead up to the new year is often a time for us to reflect on our habits, lifestyle choices and make plans for our future. But how many of these resolutions are centred around how our actions impact others? We should remember that as John addresses the crowds and they cry out, 'What should we do?', he is not interested in how the crowds look, their work targets or status, but is concerned about renewed hearts and lives for Jesus.

Christmas Shopping

Do you tend to stock up your cupboards at Christmas with more treats and snacks than usual, so you can share them with friends and family? How often do we stop to think about those who are not able to even buy enough food for one meal? Could you spare a few extra tins or dry foods to support your local Foodbanks this week?

Ask yourself: How might what these young people are doing be 'good news' for someone?

DO AND DO NOT

Take time to think and pray about John's words to the groups of people. Now write one example of a 'Do…' that Jesus might be asking of you to change or do differently, and one 'Do not…' about another aspect of life. Put them somewhere to remind you to try and live in this way.

When do you normally open your Advent calendar? Is it as soon as you wake up, to retrieve a yummy treat? This week, challenge yourself to save it until the end of the day. Once you have opened the door, write on the inside something which you have done for others today before you eat!

What would you do?

Spend some time re-reading the passage and imagine that you are in the crowds with John preaching. How would you respond to hearing his message today about what we must do? Have your attitudes or behaviour been challenged in this way before? Although spoken over 2,000 years ago, John's message is still relevant today. If you find yourself in a moral dilemma this week, try remembering these words, 'What then should we do?' And think about how your faith might influence your next move.

WATCH

Watch a clip of *The Muppet's Christmas Carol* [U] when charity workers ask Scrooge for money https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHHK9MVaMkM and a second clip when he has had a change of heart and purpose! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyshHNNBW2k

How had learning to help and love others changed Scrooge's life? Are there any small changes you could make to help others this Christmas?

© ROOTS for Churches Ltd 2021

What should we do? Luke 3.7-18

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

Some people had come to John to be baptized. 'You are like poisonous snakes,' he said to them. 'You think that just because you have Abraham as your ancestor you can get away with pretending to live good lives, and pretending to be sorry for the wrong that you do. But I tell you this: just as the farmer cuts down a tree that does not produce good fruit, so will you have no place with God, if you do not produce good fruit by the way that you live.'

The people asked John, 'What should we do to live a new life with God?'

He replied, 'If anyone has two coats, they must give one to someone with none; whoever has food, must share it with someone who has nothing to eat.'

Some tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, 'What about us? What should we do?'

John said, 'Charge the right amount. Be honest.'

Some soldiers asked him, 'What should we do?'

'Don't be bullies,' John told them. 'Treat people with respect, and be satisfied with the money you earn.'

People were getting excited, thinking that John might be the Messiah, so John said to them, 'No. I baptize with water, but someone is coming who is more powerful than me. I'm not fit to undo the strap of his sandal. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with power from God, like fire. When he comes, he will sort out good from evil, like a farmer separates wheat seeds from the chaff, and his power will last for ever.'

So John the Baptist proclaimed the good news of God to the people. But King Herod, whom he had criticised for all the wrong things he had done, put John in prison.

Luke 3.7-18

Did you know?

- Tax collectors were unpopular and often charged too much, keeping money for themselves.
- The Messiah was the 'anointed one', someone chosen by God to save the Jewish people, also a title used for Jesus

Luke 3.7-18 (NRSV)

John said 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? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."
And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you."
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."
As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."
So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

© ROOTS for Churches Ltd 2021 **rootsontheweb.com**