The great leveller

Luke 3.1-6

John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin, preaches the word of God in the land surrounding the river Jordan. John preaches a baptism for changed hearts and lives, in order to make way for Jesus and fulfil the prophecy as spoken by the prophet Isaiah, 'prepare the way of the Lord'. Isaiah shows that Jesus' message is one of equality – not just for certain people.

Now read **Luke 3.1-6** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

As John prepares the hearts and lives of the crowds around him for Jesus' coming, we are also in a time of preparation for Christmas. This time of Advent is of course about preparing for the festivities, but this passage reminds us it is also about preparing for the true meaning of Christmas, and the message of love and hope and equality which Jesus brings. How can you bring that meaning into your preparations?

GIFT GIVING

John tells us that Jesus is to be the great leveller, meaning Jesus will bring equality. If you are buying or making Christmas gifts this week, could you also buy for someone less fortunate then yourself? Try and buy an extra toy or create a box of goodies for a local children's charity, so that we too can become levellers in our communities this Christmas.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Create a Christingle using a large orange to represent the world, a red ribbon tied around it to show Jesus' love poured out, sweets on four cocktail sticks as the four corners of the world, and a candle in the centre of the orange, to symbolise Jesus as the light of the world. Put equal amounts of sweets on the sticks, to show how Jesus came to bring equality for all. Light the candle, and pray for any areas of the world which are in need of Jesus' love and light this Christmas.

Ask yourself: How might this image help us explore 'Jesus is for all'?

Christmas MESSAGE

Create your own Christmas cards this year. Include within them your favourite Bible verse or an encouraging message from Scripture, to tell others about Jesus the great leveller and all he has done for you.

Silent night

How often do we find silence and calm in the month of December? Does it feel like the busiest month to you? Can it sometimes feel like we are too busy to spend time with God? Try to be still and spend some time in silent prayer. Light a tall candle, and watch and wait as it begins to melt. Do this every night during Advent as we await Jesus' birth. How do you think Mary felt that first Christmas, waiting for Jesus? How do you think John felt, waiting for Jesus?
How do you feel, waiting for Jesus?

WILDERNESS WALK

In our passage this week, we hear about the wilderness where John is preaching. Wrap up warm and take a walk in your local area. You could create a nature tick list, checking off things from the passage which you experience along the way, such as a path and/or valley, and when you are treading on rough or smooth ground. As you walk, take time to consider some paths in your life: What do they look like? Are there ups and downs/rough and smooth?

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The great leveller Luke 3.1-6

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.

Tiberius was Emperor of Rome. Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea. Herod was ruler of Galilee and Philip and Lysanias were the other local rulers. Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. These were the powerful people when the word of God came to John, son of Zechariah. John went through the whole district around the river Jordan, teaching people that they must repent and turn away from sin, and be baptized, as a sign of a new way of life with God.

The prophet Isaiah had described it like this when he said: 'A voice will cry out in the wilderness: "Prepare a way for the Lord! Make his paths straight. All the valleys will be filled in, and the mountains lowered down to make the road smooth and straight. Then everyone will see how God will save us."'

Luke 3.1-6

Did you know?

- Repent means saying sorry to God for what you have done; having a change of heart.
- A prophet is someone who wrote down messages from God, a long time ago, about the promised Messiah.

Luke 3.1-6 (NRSV)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

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