

JOHN THE BAPTIST PREPARES THE WAY

MARK 1:1-18

Sunday, December 10, 2017

Mark 1:3, “a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

I think I speak for most people when I say that there are very few positive things about shopping. In fact, I can think of only two: 1. the electronics department and 2. the food sample tables. Do you know about the sample tables? These are tables— seen all over many large supermarkets—manned by one individual cooking sample foods on the spot and inviting you to partake. Now the host’s goal for the sample table is different from my goal for the sample table. Their goal is to get me to purchase something; my goal is to fill up on free samples. Sometimes I think my grandkids go to the supermarket with me just to get free samples. After they (we) get full then we move on to the electronics department.

We sometimes treat Jesus like a supermarket sample table. We partake for our own good, but we’re not interested in “buying in” to the product itself. Why do you follow Jesus? Is it for self-interest or divine interest? The Gospel of Mark compels us to answer the question, “Do I follow Jesus because of who He is, or because of what He can do for me?” Mark anxiously tells his readers in the first verse of the book, Who is Jesus? He is the “Son of God”. Peter and Andrew, James and John—they all responded with haste. While their initial response is immediate; the text later demonstrates that they certainly didn’t know what they were getting themselves into. Although these disciples follow Jesus immediately, the rest of the Gospel shows that they failed to consider the cost. And the cost turned to be too high; they all abandoned Jesus before ultimately coming back to Him.

As we see John the Baptist urging repentance in the desert, we listen carefully to his message and prepare carefully for Jesus’ second coming. Yet we also see John the Baptist and remember that God is faithful to all his promises. He sent the great forerunner—John the Baptist. He sent the Savior. He forgives our sins. He saved us!

Remember, the goal of the food sample table at your local supermarket is that you would buy the product. The samples are not designed to satisfy completely; they are meant to validate the quality of the product on the shelf or in the freezer

and as a result persuade you to purchase. Likewise, Jesus' miracles are not intended to satisfy completely; they are designed to validate the true identity of Jesus and as a result persuade you to embrace Him. Jesus desires for us to do more than merely sample for our own good. He wants us to consume, to purchase, and to entirely buy in. Do you treat Jesus like a sample table?

Why are you following Jesus? Are you in it to get something from Him, or are you in it for Him alone?

Prayer: Lord God, you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for your Son to come. We now ask that his message of repentance ring clearly in our hearts as we prepare carefully for your Son to return once more. Keep us watchful and ready! Amen.

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