2024 11 08 the PREPARER and me.

Malachi 3:1-4. Luke 1:68-69. Philippians 1:3-11. Luke 3:1-6.

The PREPARER of the Way.

Luke 1:39-80. 3:1-22. 7:18-29.

Background: Some thousand years before Jesus,the prophets, the ones whom God sent message through, spoke of a time when a Messiah/leader would come who would conquer Israel’s enemies and bring a time of peace and prosperity. They said that God would send a messenger before him who would prepare the way for his coming. Much as a politician, or famous person today has a people who go ahead and get everything organized for them.

In the times of our Lord Jesus, the Romans rule the known world and constructed roads that would enable the quick movement of troops and for the smooth travel of emperors and the like.

The construction of a modern walking track to follow the ancient track between the coast and the mountains, called the Bundian Way, starts in Eden. The original, walking track, made by feet, was used by Indigenous tribes to access food, (sea food and Bogon moths) hold meetings with other tribes (family) groups, settle disputes, exchange goods and maybe find wives.

The modern track has been planned, funds raised and is being constructed in sections.

800 years before Jesus’ birth, Isaiah prophesied that a baby was to be born and he would be called; the King of Kings, Lord of Lord, Might Prince, Mighty God, wonderful counselor, everlasting Father, prince of peace. That he was coming into our world as one of us - his creations! Isaiah 9:6.

*Malachi 3:1. Some 450 years before had confirmed the coming of this baby and of a forerunner to prepare people for his coming: “behold, I will send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom I delight. Look, He is coming.”*

So knowing that an important person was coming - what would I have done, what would you have done -tidied up the house, locked away the beggars, the drug addicts, demolished the crime areas, pretied up the street and houses, I heard a story that after a bombing during the second WW people opened their doors and found the King and Queen standing on their doorstep – they were making unannounced visits to an area that had been bombed!  *song – if Jesus was coming to your house?*

Here is what God did to prepare for His Son, the essence of Himself, to come and walk on this earth.

He chose to send a baby to an old couple, who had no children, who would raise the child to be the one who announced the Saviors coming.

John, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, was born to them in their old age.

Now each of us are a miracle from God, God chose Zacharias and Elizabeth to create the baby and he choose the DNA of these parents to create John and trusted them to raise him.

YOU and I. we may have been wanted or not planned, of terrible parents or great parents – but God wanted a touch of the DNA of these two people, out of the billions of possible people, each with their individual billions of DNA.to create us individuals. To create you and I.

Each of us, as was John, were create to be Gods family and preparer the way for others to come to Jesus, the Son of God, the savior, - to come into people’s lives –**now** **we have** the same charge and purpose as John did - two thousand years later.

Our individual preparation by God is unique and special for where we are placed by God – often by our own wrong choices, we end up in the wrong place ( take a side trip of the Bundian Way you could end up lost or in a dangerous situation) and yet, God is with us and enabling us to be a preparer of the way for others. We do not need to wait until fully grown in the faith, we do not need to be able to walk the full path, just start, take another with us and be wise and watchful of snakes, trip hazed and others who want to take a side trip from our walk in God.

Remember who the enemy is –“we do not wrestle against other people but against spiritual forces” (Eph 6:12) We are not alone – Gods’ Presence – His Holy Spirit is with us and in us and the Spirit is our guide, companion, teacher, encourager and brings Jesus to us. (John chpts 14,15)

1 Cor 10:13 “God says ‘I will not allow you to be tempted beyond the point were you are unable to bear with it, I will make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.’” We are never lost to God.

When John was born the words of Zacharias, his farther, tell us of the home in which John was raised:

Luke 1:68

“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,

For He has visited and redeemed His people,

And has raised up a horn of salvation for us …

That we should be saved from our enemies

And from the hand of all who hate us,

To grant us that we,

Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,

Might serve Him without fear,

In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life

John was raised in a comparatively wealthy home, a priest home, and probably his parents died when he was young? maybe 12 years old, which was the age when Jewish boys where considered adult. He lived in the desert and ate the available food – locust (high protein,) and honey (sugar and other nutrients). Jesus on the other hand was raised in a poor home and had other brothers and sisters, and even though his step-father may have died his mother Mary was still alive. He had a family home.

The charge given to John at his birth V76. Was: “you child, will be the prophet of the Highest: you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways*, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercies of our God*, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us*. To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. To guide our feet into the way of peace*.” v79

**Is this still the charge for each of us now, today?**

The message of preparation for walking with Jesus was **and still is** ‘repentance’ and remission/ forgiveness, the washing away of our rebellions against God. The Spirit of God coming in us. Bringing light into people’s life through this. We are sent to prepare the way for others to come and grow in Jesus.

When Jesus sent out the disciple and seventy others – two by two – His instructions were “say ‘**the Kingdom of God has come near to you.’**” Luke 10:1-17.

Compare the words of John the baptizer, to the multitudes who came out to be baptized, “you brood of vipers who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance,” His mission was to wake people up to their sinfulness, to repent and to show it in their lives and be ready to meet Jesus. The disciples, 82 of them, were sent out, they were to tell the good news “the kingdom of God has come near you.”

Repentance is not just turning away from our sins/our rebellious/self – now we can to a degree do that in our own strength. Repentance is turning away as an outcome of heart and will repentance – Note the case of the magician Simon Magnus, he repented and was baptized but his motives were not clean. (Acts 8:9-24) He marveled at the power that the Spirit/Gods Presence gave to the actions and words of Peter and John, he offered them money for this gift and thus revealed his heart to be “not right in the sight of God”.

The essence of repentance is in the words: “Against you…, I have sinned oh Lord and done this evil in your sight.” (Psalm 51:4) Deep anguished grief knowing – yes I sinned against that person but they are Gods creation and I, in hurting that person, have sinned directly against God.

And the Lords words to those who asked “Lord, when did we give you a cup of water Lord and when did we see you in need and come to your aid?” – Jesus reply – “whenever you did it for the least of these my children, you did it to ME.” (Math 25:37).

Repentance is regret of the heart and soul to God and flowing onto the people that we have harmed and to a change in us, that shows the path of forgiveness and walking with God to other people.

V18 shows us God’s love and approachableness, “come now, let us reason together, “says the Lord, “though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be read like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Gods love is the source of our salvation, but it was not enough, Gods holiness and righteousness brought the horror of Jesus taking our sins into himself and God abandoning him –“My God, My God why have you forsaken me!!” and the absolute finality of his dying breath “It is finished”.

What is finished? The purity of Jesus bearing the filth of humanity, descending into hell. (Acts 2:24,1 Peter 3:19 and others) I believe he left our sins there, and in God raising Him from the dead sealed our eternity. Do we try and drag our sins back with constant pleas for forgiveness when God has eternally washed them away?

Baptism was to be the Kingdoms way of showing our repentance and desire to be clean, our old self in going under the water and raised up out of the water as a physical act of being a new clean creation in Jesus our savior. Baptism replaces ‘sacrifices’.

The Lord verified this baptism by being baptized himself– John was ? astounded “Lord I need to be baptized by you! You have no need to be cleansed – allow it to happen now John, as a pathway for others to follow “was Jesus response.” Baptism is no magic, it is a statement by us that we repent and turn to God and will follow the pathway laid out for us.

When Jesus came up from the water a VOICE was heard coming from above – ‘this is my beloved Son in him I am well pleased (Luke 9:35)– listen to him.” The voice was followed by a vision of a dove which settled on Jesus – the vision of the Holy Spirit – the Presence of God came and was part of him – as He can be with us (Jesus promises in John)

One last point: When Mary came to visit Elizabeth, the baby – John – jumped in her womb -John knew Jesus from before his birth, and knew who he was - as God knows us before our birth (Psalm 139 and others) *Yet there came a time of doubt* – life became very hard for John and when he was about 34 years of age he was in prison facing death. The Messiah that his father had taught him to expect, the messiah expected by the people, was of a warrior King who would drive the Romans out and bring power and greatness back to the Israeli people.

Jesus had not done this and John maybe was discouraged and disappointed- maybe we feel this way from time to time when healing and other things that we bring before God do not happen and we feel puzzled and a certain let down by God.

John sent massagers to Jesus and asked “are you the one we expected or should we look for another?” Jesus reply was “tell John what you have seen and heard - the lame walk the blind see the dead are raised to life - the kingdom is preached to the poor.” It was in these things that Jesus showed the power of the new kingdom. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30,32.) he showed the reality in re making us and receiving us into the Kingdom of God.

The Presence of Gods Spirit in us shows out to others, as we grow in love, the joy of freedom, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Gal 5:22) “sturdy walking boots – made with the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15) **These thing are a walking gear.**

1 Peter 2:12 states it in a practical way “Be careful how you behave among your unsaved neighbors; for then even if they are suspicious of you and talk against you, they will end up praising God for your good works on the day He visits us.”

Making the pathway straight for others to walk is our commission.

The pathway will be different than we expect, but Gods love is the pathway and the Spirit of God is our guide

PRAY