

Advent 3 – December 13, 2015

Scripture – Luke 3:7-18 (New International Readers' Version)

John spoke to the crowds coming to be baptized by him. He said, "You are like a nest of poisonous snakes! Who warned you to escape the coming of God's anger? Live in a way that shows you have turned away from your sins. And don't start saying to yourselves, 'Abraham is our father.' I tell you, God can raise up children for Abraham even from these stones. The ax is already lying at the roots of the trees. All the trees that don't produce good fruit will be cut down. They will be thrown into the fire."

"Then what should we do?" the crowd asked.

John answered, "Anyone who has extra clothes should share with the one who has none. And anyone who has extra food should do the same."

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

"Don't collect any more than you are required to," John told them.

Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

John replied, "Don't force people to give you money. Don't bring false charges against people. Be happy with your pay."

The people were waiting. They were expecting something. They were all wondering in their hearts if John might be the Messiah. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I am will come. I'm not good enough to untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His pitchfork is in his hand to toss the straw away from his threshing floor. He will gather the wheat into his barn. But he will burn up the husks with fire that can't be put out." John said many other things to warn the people. He also announced the good news to them.

Lesson to discuss as a family

This is the time immediately before Jesus began his ministry, and clearly the world was in need of a savior. By calling them "poisonous snakes" John is pointing out that the people are turning away from God and making bad decisions. John is telling people to repent (turn away from the wrong and do the right) and change their ways because Jesus is coming. John gives them examples of what to do: share what you have with others, don't steal or lie or complain.

Talk about how this lesson applies to your family. Do you have extra clothes you can share with those who don't have what they need? What if you bought fewer new clothes or toys for yourselves and bought new clothes for people in need?

The people knew that John was different, and they were wondering if (and probably hoping that) John was the Messiah they were waiting for. John clarified that he was not the one, but that the Messiah was coming, and he made sure that the people understood the difference. Then John goes on to talk about how the good people will be saved (by their faith in Jesus) and those not following Jesus would have another fate. Remember that John was a prophet, and God had given him a message to deliver. The message was that people needed to be ready for Jesus, and they needed to be preparing for his arrival.

Are you, as a family, ready for the arrival of Jesus? Each of us can do better at living the way that Jesus shows us to. And at the very least we can do our best to have harmony and not discord at home. Talk about little things each of you can do.

Activity Banner

We have provided you with a picture of John the Baptist and some blue foam. Create the scene where John is baptizing people with water. Add to the banner things that each member of the family wants to “turn away from” and things that you want to start doing more so that you are “prepared” for the coming of our Lord.

Family Activity

Sort through your clothes, books, toys or housewares and set aside the best ones to give to someone in need. Here is a list of possible donation sites:

My Sister’s House <http://mysistershouse.org/>

Provides safe shelter and resources for lowcountry women and children fleeing abuse. There is a donation box on the Christ Church campus.

ECCO – East Cooper Community Outreach www.eccocharleston.org

Helping our neighbors in need is an outstanding achievement in and of itself. **ECCO** believes everyone deserves a chance for better quality of life. Donations of clothing and housewares are taken at their Six Mile Road facility.