

Christ Our Sure Hope of Conversion

2023.09.24 Morning Sermon in **Matthew 3:1–12**

1In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” 3For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.’”

4Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him 6and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

7But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees.

Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Main idea: For the kingdom to be good news to us, we must be transformed into its subjects. And to all who receive Him, King Jesus does just that by His Spirit.

Introduction: An inclusio with the Great Commission: the King Who exercises authority to transform people into His disciples by His Spirit.

1. Requirement of Conversion: “Be ye converted!”

a. Change the substance of your mind! Not just the opinions, thoughts, or habits of your mind.

b. The gospel comfort of Isa 40 (v3) is preceded by a change in topography wrought by the Word.

c. Necessity of humility

i. The point of John’s clothing and diet (v4, cf. 11:8 in its context).

ii. The danger of clinging to past performance (v7a), religious exercises (v7b), or membership (v9). Only one thing can bear the fruits of v8—new loves must come from a new heart.

2. Urgency of Conversion: “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

- a. It's here! Its nearness in the history of the world presses its nearness in the history of your life.
- b. What's here?
 - i. It comes as "wrath" (v7). It comes as a discriminating ax (v10). It comes as the tossing of the winnowing fork, which anticipates the burning of the chaff with unquenchable fire (v12).
 - ii. Christ's assault on the kingdom of hell (cf. 16:18) presses you for allegiance to one or the other. The wonderful promise of deliverance for God's remnant is perpetually tied to the dreadful promise of vengeance upon God's enemies.

3. Hope of Conversion: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit"

- a. What the Pharisees and Sadducees couldn't do for themselves (v7–8), John couldn't do for anyone either (v11a). What is water able to do unto conversion?
- b. What God alone could do (v9b, cf. Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 36:22–28) ...
- c. Jesus Himself would do (end of v11)!
 - i. The pouring of the Spirit is the essential Christian baptism. It is the "one baptism" of Eph 4:5
 - ii. Christian water baptism is not connected backward to the baptism from John but "upward" to the baptism from Christ
 - 1. A washing with water as a sign that the Lord defined in Ezekiel. But a sign, defined by One Who makes a promise, is also a seal of the reality and reliability of His keeping that promise.
 - 2. Specifically, a seal of Ezek 26:28 augmented by the name revealed in Matt 28:19
 - a. Conscientious awareness of God as Father.
 - b. Conscientious awareness of and clinging to union with the Son.
 - c. Conscientious awareness of and enjoyment of the indwelling of the Spirit.
 - 3. A new covenant under Christ. Not by wholesale replacement of the "old" covenant under Adam/Seth, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David. But by fulfillment for the remnant of Israel (promised to/ through Abraham, Moses, David) and ingathering of the remnant from the nations (the promise/hope of Adam/Seth, Noah... as was always the hope throughout).
 - iii. A Christian will always feel the need of the new heart—even and especially after he has one (cf. Rom 12:2)! And his water baptism assures him that the Christ-King Who came, and died, and rose again, and ascended, and sits, and intercedes... He will certainly and almightily apply that salvation by His Spirit.

Conclusion: Have you a heart of stone? The Lord Jesus is God, Who pours out His Spirit to give the living flesh heart of a child of Abraham. Be converted! Have you a new heart in which you can still painfully feel the remaining stoniness? The Lord Jesus is

God, Who pours out His Spirit to keep renewing your heart. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind!

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Matthew 3 verses 1 through 12. As we are coming first to hear the word of god red. Let us stand.

Matthew 3 verses 1 through 12, these are God's words. In those days. John the baptist came preaching in the wilderness of judea. And saying, repent. For the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he who was spoken of By the prophet Isaiah saying. The voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Prepare the way of the lord. Make his paths straight. Now, john himself was clothed in camel's hair. With a leather belt, rent his waist. And his food was locusts and wild honey. Than jerusalem old judea. And all the region around the Jordan. Went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan.

Confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees, Coming to his baptism. He said to them, Brood of vipers. Who warned you to flee? From the wrath to come. Therefore, their fruits. Worthy of repentance. And do not think to say to yourselves. We have abraham as our father.

For, i say to you, that god. Is able to raise up children to abraham. From. These. Stones. And even now, The ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree, which does not bear good. Fruit. It's cut down. And thrown. And to the fire. I indeed baptize you with water.

Unto repentance. But he who is coming after me. Is mightier than i. His sandals. I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the holy spirit. Far. His winnowing fan. Is in his hand. And he will thoroughly. Clean out his threshing floor. And gather, his wheat. Into the barn.

But he will burn up the chaff With. Questionable. Quenchable. Fire. So far the reading. Of gods inspired and And Aaron tort Please visit it.

As we come to the end of matthew. One, one through three 12, we come really to the conclusion of matthew's introduction to his book. Jesus's earthly ministry. Is going to begin. And verse 13, then jesus came. From galilee. Uh, which we have already heard last week, is a reference to the humility to, which he had been lowered, even as a man.

That he would be called a nazarene. That he would come. As as it were. As a Lower class blue. Uh, collar. Uh, despised by those who seem to be something in the world. Man. Jesus is going to come from galilee. And he is going to end up. Living and teaching.

Obediently. And dying atoningly. And rising again from the dead with power. And then at the conclusion of the book, the other book end, He is going to announce himself. As the king not only over the earth. But as the king of heaven, Who exercises not just authority. On the earth.

To lead a kingdom of subjects. But to exercise, as authority from heaven, To give by his spirit. Grace. To make us subjects. That we might be enabled to be and live as disciples. And keep the things, all the things that he has commanded us by his being with us.

Even into the end. Jesus is. The. Climax, the fulfillment. Of all of the expectations of scripture, all of the expectations of history. That's what matthew has been saying. Uh so far from the beginning of his book, we heard even in the first sermon and the first words with which he intentionally quotes genesis 5, That Jesus was the true Adam the true set the appointed one who had crush the head of the serpent.

That Jesus is the true abraham. In whom all of the families of the earth would be blessed. That Jesus is the true david. Whose reign would be righteous and would be powerful and would bring into subjection. Not just a remnant of a reunited, israel and judah. But her remnant from all of the nations.

And he will say at the end as you go. Make disciples of all of the nations. And then in last week's portion, We heard, especially that. Jesus is the one. In whom everlasting adopting, love was given in the first place. Jesus is the son. Whom god has in view.

When he? Saves a wicked people from egypt. They were not good in agent. They were wicked and idolatrous. But he had called them, his son. How why? With god, adopt such a people in that plan of redemption and which he would bring salvation through. Well, it's the love that he has for his son and for those who in his son, he has determined from all eternity that he will say.

And so it's with a view to the elect. That he sends Moses to pharaoh and says, israel is my firstborn son. It's a few of you to Christ in whom he has chosen the electorate. He says these are mine. I won't let you have. Let them go. That they may serve me.

It was viewed that his son, the lord Jesus. That he says, in Hosea 11. That out of egypti called his son. And he raised him up, like, Like a daddy teaching his little toddler boy, how to walk. And even after his son was rebellious. He wouldn't let the rebellion be the last word.

But an overcoming everlasting electing and redeeming love. He would. Heal the rebellion. Of those whom he had loved in Jesus. And so it says love for his everlasting son his eternally. Begotten son, his only begotten, son that there has ever been any sort of saving love. In history. And use it the same language in jeremiah 31.

Out of which he selected the voice heard in rama on the lamentation and the weeping and the murder. Of the children in bethlehem and the surrounding region. But that too was coming in the providence of god, to restore his people to himself, which is the theme of jeremiah 31 from which that that particular versus quoted.

And now he He sends. The last prophet. As the lord Jesus himself, is going to refer to him. In chapter 11, the last prophet the greatest prophet. He's the one he's a prophet who had been prophesied. In isaiah chapter 40. And that's where our Our passage begins. And those days, John, the baptist came preaching in the wilderness.

Of judea saying repent for the kingdom of heaven as a hand. For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way and in isaiah, it is of yahweh. Um, Although the capitals are a little bit misleading here in in the New King James because in greek they translated it to cure a curious lord.

Um, Prepare the way of the lord. Make his paths straight. And there in isaiah 40. The lord is again, preaching comfort to a sinful and wicked people. And he's especially saying that he is going to display himself as the incomparable god. By redeeming an unworthy people. Of people whose hearts are actually pictured in the, poetry of isaiah 40.

As as laying obstacles and opposition to the lord coming to rule them and take them as his people. And so there are mountains that are thrown up in the in the way and there are valleys that are put in the way. And in isaiah 40, the great theme of the chapter is god will show his incomparable divinity.

To which no creature can be compared and the way that he has chosen to show the greatness of his godness, Is by redeeming. Unworthy sinners. And himself being their life himself being their strength. And intentionally choosing those who are weak. To show that. Whereas those Who are quote unfoot strong?

Those who are strong in themselves. Will grow weary. Those whom he chooses to redeem by his strength. He is giving them a life that will never end, he is giving them a strength that will never run out. And that wherever his people might find themselves in his work, in saving you somewhere between the those who he foreign you and The he also glorified of the passage that's coming up and is coming midweek meeting wherever you find yourself in the middle of there, it ends with the he also glorified, he had it ends with the conformed to the image of his son.

It ends with Him knowing them. And they knowing him as he had determined to do in himself before there was anything else. From all eternity. That isaiah 40 is describing that coming. And somehow matthew by the spirit says, John's ministry. John's ministry is a ministry by which mountains are going to be laid low.

John's ministry is a ministry by which Giant potholes. Like, The city of detroit after they ran out of money and that doesn't mean much to Y'all, because you're not michiganders. For Michigus. But the giant potholes of the human rebellion are going to be filled up by this word that calls us to Conversion.

That calls us to convert. Yes, it says repentance. Well, here about that in a moment. But that's the ministry of john as summarized then, and these 12 verses A ministry. By which the spirit calls us to conversion. God sends john before. Jesus. God says, john as his word in front of the king that which was actually offered to aham, And ahab refused.

You remember the, the slaughter of the prophets of bail? And if bail is god serve him but if yahweh is god servant. And and the, the great display. That yahai is god. And then the the word brings the rain. And you remember the, the profit elijah. Running. In front of the chariot, the herald of the king and god offering to ahab.

The opportunity for conversion the opportunity to be. To follow the word of god and have a kingdom. Where everything is is paved. Clear. And prepared by the herald that goes in front of the king but of course ahab wasn't that king And none of the sons of david from david down to jesus's adopted daddy Joseph have been that king but now, the king has come and the word is going in front of him and god is speaking comfort to his people and he's coming in all mighty power.

And that, which he does. Historically in, in matthew chapter 3, he offers to every one of us. That by his spirit using his word. He would convert us. And so in this passage is as The spirit concludes the introduction to the book of matthew. He gives us the requirement.

Of conversion. Repent, or even better. And yes. Of, it's not old english. It's bible english. The years and these. We're not. Uh, so common in the late 16th and early 17th century. The those that language was Was used in the Geneva, bible in the authorized version for the purpose of reflecting, the original language of the bible better.

It was not the common language of the time. So even better than repent. Be ye converted, the requirement of conversion. And then we'll hear the. Urgency of conversion. For the kingdom of heaven. Excuse me. For the kingdom of heaven is at hand. This required conversion is urgent. It is not something to be put off.

It is not something to be trifled with. You must deal with god, now The urgency of conversion for the kingdom of heaven as a hand. And then in the last place, lord willing. Excuse me. And this may be next Lord's day. If the lord should spare us. And if not, you will save us instead of sparing us that's fine, too.

Um, the hope of conversion. That is the one who comes after him. The one who is mightier? The one who in the isaiah, 40 image, Is yahweh. He will baptize you with the holy spirit. Because there's this. Required conversion. BE converted. But how can you be converted? If you need to be converted.

She can't convert yourself. And there's this urgent conversion. This is urgency of the conversion. It's not just required and impossible. But it's required and urgent and impossible. And then as the climax of John's ministry, The one who is following him. Is the one who could give it. And the one who, Because he is coming in wrath because he is going to destroy his enemies.

He came first to give the conversion. He came first to give the salvation. He came to bring a new age, a new administration of the covenant of grace. In which he sits on a throne in heaven. And his people on earth. Don't just go through the struggles that we continue to go through, in, in the new covenant, just like a believer would in the old covenant.

We all struggle with our sin. But we struggle with our sin, as those who are united to a savior who sits on the throne of heaven. All authority in heaven and unearth has been given to me. And we struggle with our sin as those who belong to a savior who has poured out.

His spirit, not just to be with us. To give us the life that we need, which is the only way any sinner old covenant or new has ever gotten life. But to be in us, That every single believer in this administration of the covenant of grace would be intelt by god's holy spirit.

And dwelt by the spirit who makes our own particular private heart. Call god, our abba. And so that which the the exile had really pressed home. That moses couldn't bring what Moses had promised and David couldn't bring what had been promised in. David god himself would bring and there would be a administration of this covenant.

And we'll see it. Lord helping us in jeremiah and ezekiel when we get to the third point and and go back there that there would be an administration of this covenant. The visible church. Would be led by an invisible head. Although not entirely and is visible but he's visible in glory.

Where we can't see him.

And so, that's the That's the great emphasis of the passage. This is the hope of conversion. We spend a little time on it. A little more time on at the beginning, just because i don't know if we're going to be able to to get there. And by we, i mean, If?

The. The weak. Uh, servant is going to be able to get there. As we go, by God's help. So first, The requirement of conversion and those days, John, the baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. That area between Jerusalem. And the Jordan river. Saying be, ye converted. The the word is a word is a combination of the word for substance and the word for mind.

And And the idea to have your mind changed and I've heard people preach on this who preached about the change of mind, that is that is being commended here. Because he's saying change your way of thinking Change your opinions, change, your theology change, your view of yourself, change your view of God, change your view of sin, change your view of righteousness.

Change your view of how a sinner comes to be righteous. Change your habits of thought. And all those things are necessary, but that is not what's being commanded. His commending them. To have the substance of their mind changed. And exchange. Of mines. If you will. Is really? Um, I know it's a little bit of a paraphrase.

To say, be ye converted. But it's a paraphrase. It gets at the essence of this. Have a mind that is of a different substance altogether. Get a new nature. Is what he's saying here?

Now. This requires something that only God can do. The Babylon Assyria Persia. You know, there were pretty powerful But they were not able to level mountains. And fill in great. Valleys.

John was sent. To command something. That only the almighty God himself can do. And so there's a necessity of humility here. And there really is another one of those times where chapter divisions don't help us. There's a there's a Continuing theme of the necessity of humility. I hope I don't remember last week's sermon very well.

God forgive me and you bear patiently with me. I hope that one of the applications that we made. And response to Jesus, being willing to be humiliated. Was not just that we would praise him as king of kings and lord of lords, which is his right and due for being willing to be humiliated.

Humiliated like Philippians 2 teaches us that we say look at what Jesus was willing, how Jesus low, Jesus was willing to be made for for my sake. And we praise him for that. But that we would also imitate him. That we would have the mind that was in Christ Jesus that we would treat others as better than our better than ourselves.

And so there is A, a theme of humility. And the stream actually continues. Uh, with the way John comes now. Yes, he looks a little bit like Like Elijah. Um, but that is not entirely the point here. The the prophets. Uh, dress and the prophets diet. Although other prophets, got to eat better things in some profits, got to eat.

Worse things. Um, If you see Ezekiel bread, In the store. Refuse to buy it on theological grounds. Because they did not cook it over cow dung. Um, Or maybe they did and they're just really superstitious and then Rejected on idolatrous grounds. Um, But the point of John's clothing and diet is how humble he is.

See Jesus himself is going to pick up the idea. Of. John's clothing and John's diet when talking about conversion. In chapter 11. He's gonna say what did you go out to see talking about John? And how he was made of sturdy stuff. Although even the one who was really made of sturdy stuff, they say, did you go out to see a reed shaken by the wind and everyone say, no, you should have heard that guy preach.

And even after he got arrested, she didn't heard how he's still talked to the king. But remember in chapter 11, John has heard about the works. That christ is doing. And he sends to his disciples and he's, they say to jesus on behalf of john. Are you the coming one?

The voice from isaiah, 40. Sends to ask jesus. Are you the coming one? Turns out he is in himself. To some extent, a read shaken by the wind, Not shaken by herit. But still. After all of his confidence and hope even in his cousin of me is preaching is yahweh who pours out the holy spirit.

He's discouraged. He goes through a time of weakness and struggle. But we are. We are to be humble. And to see our need for conversion. And so jesus. Um, Says to them. Go tell john the things that you hear and see, and In the parallel. Passage, we read that.

Jesus even does extra miracles right there in front of them so they can go back and tell john about those specific ones. He's, he's merciful To his weak servant twice because he's the one who gives spiritual life. He doesn't expect it from john, he's giving it two john. And that's how conversion works.

It is not. God getting from you what he expects. It's god, giving to you. What he expects. And so, he makes the point about his clothes. Says, what did you go out to see a man? Closed and soft garments. Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in king's houses.

Good. Don't you remember the camel's hair? Nobody wants to wear camels hair. However, well you you do it. I have In god's. Strange and merciful providence to me. On the floor of a bedroom. In a double wide in rural tennessee. There is a camel's hair rug. That was purchased in the old city of jerusalem.

That now gets covered with. Mixed breed dogs hair. But even before the dog, I would not have wanted to wear that thing. I mean, they had made they had made it really finely. Spun. And it's really nicely loving but it wouldn't be comfortable. You see what jesus is saying?

Saying, john isn't one of the great ones of the world. This one who is humble enough to know that you needed conversion? His one who is humble enough to know? That the water that he applied to others couldn't produce. What he had preached that they need. That only the spirit that jesus applies can produce what john had preached.

And that's the, that's the The key to understanding what he says, but what did you go out to see a prophet? Yes, i say to you and more than a prophet, for this, is he of whom it has written. And now jesus quotes. Isaiah chapter 40. Well, jesus was the first matthew comes later, right?

Behold, i send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you And he says, assuredly, i say to you among those born of women there has not risen one greater than john the baptist. The prophet who is prophesied. Or a profit was prophesied. Jesus is also and he is the prophet who has prophesied.

There is not risen one greater than john the baptist but he who is least In the kingdom of heaven. Is greater than he. And from the days of john, the baptist until now The kingdom of heaven suffers violence. And the violent take it by force. So saying, Is saying almighty power is necessary.

To enter the kingdom. John couldn't enter the kingdom by his power. All jerusalem and judea who are coming out to him couldn't enter the kingdom by their mind. The Pharisees and the Sadducees. He came out couldn't enter the kingdom by their power. There is all mighty power that is necessary to transfer someone from the kingdom of this world or the kingdom of satan.

To the kingdom of heaven.

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah, who is to come. The one who runs in front of the true king. Who is? Himself. The chariots of Israel and their horses. He who has ears. To hear.

Let him hear. And so, that's the point. It's not for us to say boy. He was weird, he ate locusts and wild honey. This is actually not unusual. There are other references to the Bible in the Bible to wild honey and Jonathan eats wild, honey and Samson, eats a while honey.

And even to this day, Nomadic. People in that part of the world will prepare and eat locusts and nobody who eats lobster or wishes they could afford it or shrimp. Or crawfish. Especially if you suck the head of the crawfish, as I learned to do in Mississippi when I grew up in seminary.

I really did grow up in seminary. No one who eats any of those things. Has any grounds on which to read Matthew 3 and say you locusts. The point does not gross food. It's humble food. Is the food of a scavenger who can't afford. The fine things that are in king's houses.

Just like he wears clothing. That you don't find on the fine, people who are in king's houses. So you have the humility of Jesus and you have the humility of John. And then you have the necessity, but lack of humility of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. You see it takes humility.

To receive what Jesus told Nicodemus in John chapter 3, talking about the same thing, what has to happen for the kingdom to be good news. Here, John is preaching. Be converted for the kingdom of heaven as a hand? In a chapter or so we're going to hear Jesus go preaching the good news of the kingdom, but the kingdom is not good news to everyone.

In fact, the arrival of the kingdom is very bad news for the other kingdom. And the subjects of the other kingdom. Which you had better not be. When the kingdom comes in fullness. And when the wrath is poured out, when the ax falls, and the unquenchable fire burns. That he's talking about in this passage.

And so you can you're in danger. Of clinging to wrong things. If you don't see that, you need Jesus. To make you a completely different person than who you were in. Adam. You need Jesus to give you the mind of the spirit, which is Jesus's mind. In place of the mind of the flesh that you need, Jesus to give you the new nature.

By which we struggle against for the rest of our earthly lives. What remains from the old nature like we heard for several weeks and Roman 7. And Romans 8, in the midweek meetings. And so the spirit gives us here an example of some of the things that we're in danger of hoping in instead.

Verse 7, but when he saw many of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, coming to his. Baptism. Well, we're already a couple half points in. By there. They're Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees. Uh, were very proud. Of following rigorously. So they thought. The moral law. And the holiness code. They were the spiritual conservatives in Israel.

When Paul is talking about what he had in the flesh, he says, as to the keeping of the law, A Pharisee. That's what that's what that word. Means that's a connotation of that word here. The Sadducees Uh, we're not so insistent about the They're keeping of the moral law and the holiness code part of the ceremonial law.

But they're maintenance of the temple. The temple, which was the symbol of god's rule the temple, which was the symbol of god salvation and his dwelling among his people. And so each of them fought themselves to be spiritually something. And john here is basically saying the same thing that jesus says to Nicodemus in the gospel of john chapter 3, You don't need to worry so much about when the kingdom arrives until you're born again.

Because the kingdom coming is not going to be good news for you until you've been born again. You must be born. Again.

And so we are in danger of thinking that we have something redeemable that was offensive to Nicodemus. When he said, can a man, you know, enter back into his His mother and be born again. He wasn't thinking. Oh, jesus means Physical rebirth. He was offended at what jesus was saying, spiritually.

How can i start over? After all that, i've learned and all that i've done and all of the progression that i have made in my religious life, how can you tell me That i have to start from zero. That there's nothing redeemable in who i am in my myself, but that i need to become completely other than i am.

That i need a new nature altogether. That was offensive. To Nicodemus. And jesus marveled at him. That the teacher of israel. Could know. God's. Holy law. And god's, holy description of himself. And not conclude. That he needed an entirely new nature. That he hadn't made any progress. But that had to come entirely from the grace of god.

How could nicodemus not see that? Well, these pharisees and these sadducees see themselves for different reasons. Like we already said the same way that nicodemus saw himself, don't you see? Don't you dare see yourself that way. Don't you dare see yourself as someone who by anything other than god's, miraculously giving you a new nature from himself to replace the nature that you got from Adam.

By anything other than that, that you have anything good in you. He did not. You cannot progress. From the flesh to the spirit. From the mind of the flesh to the mind of the spirit. You have to exchange? The mind of the flesh. For the mind of the spirit.

And so that's one danger. Thinking that. We can progress from our original condition to the necessary. Condition in order to enter the kingdom. Excuse me. The second danger is to trust and religious exercises. No, it's probably going to be two weeks. This is probably going to be three sermons.

Um, if you'll allow it and God's providence, that might give me time. To improve in health. But in, Two weeks time. We're going to hear. About. The one baptism from ephesians chapter 4. That has nothing to do with water. One lord, one faith. One baptism is not talking about the application of the water on earth.

That is talking about the baptism that saves. That is talking about jesus who gives his spirit from heaven. But it's talking about being brought into union with christ and being in dwelt by the spirit and knowing yourself as adopted by the father. By a supernatural work. That got the second person of the godhead, pours out the third person of the godhead to do.

And that's really helpful. I hope. Because there have been a lot of different ideas and a lot of different practices. In the application of the water. Other, you know, there's only two possibilities. Either just one of them has been right, or they have all been partially wronged and none of them have been Right.

But there is one baptism. That is always properly administered. And always perfectly effective. Jesus has never. Poured, his spirit onto someone. In dwelt his spirit into someone. That did not. Make it all the way to glory. One bank decision.

The water baptism on earth is. Important and beneficial. And we'll hear about that. But you can't trust in the baptism itself. You can't trust in religious exercises. Not if Church of christ and you got a superstition about the water. Not, if you're a sasserdotalist who thinks the application of the water causes regeneration in the moment.

Although god does use has sacrament by the work of his spirit. To produce regeneration. Just like he uses his word by the work of his spirit to produce regeneration. But you can't trust in the baptism itself, notice this? This A little possessive pronoun. His In verse 7, when he saw many of the pharisees and sadducees coming to his baptism and you and i don't know any Pharisees or Sadducees not like official ones.

We know a lot of their spiritual cousins, right? But Um, so we don't catch that. Uh, one of the things that's being implied, there is These guys already have a ton of baptisms. Especially the Pharisees. I mean those guys baptized their couches. You know why? Because they were really big about the washing of the hands.

And they were more concerned than the ultra celiac is about cross-contamination. And so they baptized their couch first. And then they baptized their hand, so they can recline on that couch to eat the meal, and not get any unbaptizedness on their hands by accidentally texting their seat. These guys had baptisms coming out of their ears.

But the here, there's a new one. Out to the east of the city. And all judah and jerusalem are going there. They are not going to miss out on another baptism. And some of us, Who long for spiritual life? We hope in religious exercises, and religious experiences. Some people bounce from church to church for this reason.

Because they hear about the experience of the, the contemporary worship, which was so familiar. And it lets you express yourself, which is a horrifying, Everything to do before god as lord helping us. Excuse me. Maybe not this afternoon in leviticus 10. Or then they hear about the spooky mysterious ancientness of old idolatry.

You know, the Greek Orthodox or the papists? Well, they've been idolatrous way longer than the contemporary dudes. Let's do the old idolatry. It's spookier. So it must be closer to heaven. Is mysterious dude. Who's all just man-made garbage? It's not led by jesus from heaven. It doesn't have his spirit in it.

Use the word spirit. Spirit spirit, all about it. But it's like the israelites saying the temple, the temple, the temple. And not having any of the substance of what the temple wasn't to them.

We can even do it with our family worship. Because you know, that, that's what families should do, you know, that's what warnings and evenings are for. You can do it with your sabbath, keeping. Because, you know, theologically You're supposed to delight in the lord and give us a day of delight and he He uses the training of calling the day of delight and then taking the light in the day and and that training procedure, he brings us at last to delight in the lord himself.

But any of these religious exercises, any of these religious experiences. If we are hoping in them, then we have not listened to the command be ye converted.

Isn't john's. Response. Shocking. You imagine the The church welcoming committee. You know, maybe some Deacons have Yeah. These deacons that were praying for the lord to give

us. Um, You know, martialled a bunch of Boys and girls. And to Um, ambush visitors with swag bags of Hopewell stuff and There's the welcoming committee.

And here comes visitor. Already seeing the size of the church and knowing they're going to stick out. And you know, shiny, happy homeschooler. Who earned you to flee from the wrath to come? It's really not the way you. Respond to new inquirers, as But it goes with his primary message.

If you're just here. To become a slightly improved version of yourself. Instead of to become a different person with a different mind, altogether.

Then there's no hope for you. You need. To be well, there's no hope in that. For you. You need to be. Convert it. And don't even Don't even trust in your covenant membership. Verse 9. Do not think to say to yourselves. We have abraham. As our father. Attended to listen to the Midweek sermons, when we were in Romans 4, you could just Back fill that or if you can remember all the way back to the serial readings and go.

Galatians from like four years ago.

Do not think to say to yourselves, we have abraham. As our father. For, i say to you, that god is able to raise up children To abraham. From these stones. Don't say i'm a member of the church. Don't say i have a believer. As my daddy and therefore, i am saved.

No, you have to believe. Like your daddy? And you have to be brought to believe in the same way that your daddy was brought to believe abraham was an idolater in earlier of the caldians The children of abraham are not. Those who are descended of the flesh. They're the ones who have the faith of abraham who believe in the promised seed.

And have the righteousness of that seed, counted unto them through that believing in him. The way abraham was saved was by believing in jesus. So how can someone be saved? By being genetically descended or even covenantally descendant. From abraham. If abraham himself had to be saved. By receiving a new nature and believing into christ and being given an alien righteousness through faith.

That is the only way any of us are saved. And those who are the spiritual children of abraham are saved that way. Just like abraham was

Because in order to be saved, it takes, A miracle by a power. Great enough. To turn stones into children. Jesus was not just here. Uh, Using a A fantastical. Idea, like, from a fantasy book in which the author has, Um, stones that somehow turn into people. Jesus was referring or sorry, john john.

John is referring to something that that god said he would do in ezeziel chapter 26. That he would take a heart of stone and turn it into heart of flesh. And the stones to which John may have been referring might not have been the rocks in the wilderness. East.

Of jerusalem. Could well have been the multitude. That had come out. And he's saying the one who is coming is mightier than i He is going to pour out the promised spirit of Ezeziel 26 because apart from his spirit, all our hearts are stoned. And there is not a religious exercise, and there is not a progression and behavior and there is not a covenant membership.

That can do anything to a stone to turn it into flesh. Only god the holy spirit changes, stone into flesh. And that's what jesus was coming to do.

You see? If you're the wrong kind of tree, you can't bear. Good fruit.

And the ax is lived. To the root of the tree. And he says to them. Therefore bear fruits. According to or corresponding to naking, james has worthy. Of repentance. So, Is not saying. Do a better job of fruit bearing you pharisees inside agencies, He's saying. You can't bear. Good fruit.

Because you're not a good treat. And you're recognize that what kind of tree it is. By what kind of fruit it is. And if you see your life, And it's never born fruit of love for the lord. It's never born fruit of delight in his law. Desire to do well.

It's never born the fruit. That looked that that says, You know, it's not a perfect tree but it's the other kind of tree. Then you still need to be converted. And even if you have some of that fruit, what do you want? You want the lords to continue, conforming you to jesus.

You want to? Not be conformed to the world but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And it's the same word for mind there. For the same root. Hear what he's saying? He's saying now that you have your new nature. You want that new nature more, and more reinvigorated, because that's how you become more and more like jesus, And so be, he converted?

Yes. It's a one-time thing. Where you get a new nature that you will have forever.

But be transformed by the renewing of your mind continues. For the rest of your earthly life. The whole christian life is a life of repentance. As the mind of the spirit. Leads us in and helps us kill. What remains? Of the mind of the flesh. Do you have a heart of stone?

Then jesus. Jesus is god. And as we'll hear in a couple weeks time by his help, we pray. He pours out his spirit. To turn hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. But if you have a heart to flesh, Isn't one of your great griefs in this life. How stony?

Your heart continues to be. Well, jesus is the one. Who continues to transform you? By giving you progress. In living according to the mind of the spirit, Your transformed. Whether anyway, Of your mind. Come to jesus. Don't rest on anything else. With those pharisees and said, she's just humble yourself.

If even john, if even abraham needed it, Then don't we?

Our father. We thank you and praise you. For speaking truthfully to about to us about ourselves, But we are. Incomparably, more grateful. That you have spoken the truth to us about, Your son, our lord jesus. And your holy spirit. And whom you make us to know you father to be Through union with christ.

And the endwelling ministry of your spirit. And so, we thank you that you have given to us. To be born in the last stage. To hear the gospel preached. When the new king, in the new covenant, Sits on the throne. And then when that which was promised and Hosea and Jeremiah.

Isaiah and Ezekiel. Fulfilled in our very lives. And so we pray that you would continue to fulfill it. By your spirit, which we ask in the name of your son, Amen.