

Luke 3:1-22 - The Essence of Repentance

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Will you pray with me? Father, we confess that more often than we would like to admit, those words strike to our hearts.

We know what it's like to be people who honor you with our lips and yet find our hearts to be far from you.

To be chasing after other things. Honestly, we're just better at performing than we are at trusting and resting in your heart and loving and serving others.

It's more natural to us. It's easier for us. And so, Father, forgive us when that's true of us. Father, show us that again this morning.

[1 : 03] Might we, as we look to your words, see our own sin. See the fact that our hearts don't even sometimes want to know you or love you.

And be willing to admit that. Because at the same time, we will see our great Savior. Might He be more glorious, more precious to us.

Would You teach us by Your Spirit, not just information, but things that would change our hearts. And as a result, at every moment of all of our lives.

Your Spirit's able to do that. We believe that. Your Word's powerful and it will speak this morning. And so, Father, may we be those who hear and obey and trust.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. 499 years ago this month, that's a long time, Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to the door of a church in Wittenberg, Germany.

[2 : 12] They were his complaints, his arguments he wanted to take up with the church. He wanted to talk about some things that he didn't think were right. You know what that first thesis of the 95 is?

The very first thing Luther said needed to be taken up. He said, When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, Repent, He intended that the entire life of believers should be one of repentance.

John Calvin agreed with that. He said that the worship of God consists in faith and repentance.

Jesus, when He came, when He went to a new city, what did He often say was the first thing or the summary of His message?

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That idea of repentance is one that may not seem to you like it's at the heart of Christianity.

Like it's what it's all to be about. It may not feel that exciting. You may not even know exactly what it means. Is repentance something that happens in one moment after a really big sin?

[3 : 21] There are a couple of moments in life when I'm really going to need to repent? Or is it the essence of Christianity, the daily consistent pattern of those following Jesus?

The last two weeks as we've been in the Gospel of Luke, Ron and Peter have very capably taken us through 30 years of Jesus' early life.

In two weeks, 30 years, I'd say we've got some good new pastors. What do you think? 30 years in two weeks. Pretty impressive, guys. Thank you. Now this morning we come to chapter 3.

We get one passage on the ministry of the prophet that we've been so excited about as the angel has come and promised him to his father, Zechariah. John the Baptist is now here on the scene preaching and teaching.

And the essence of John's message is repentance. It's what this passage is going to tell us. He's going to call God's people back to him.

[4 : 22] He's going to say some really hard words. Some things that really challenge them. A very difficult challenge, but it's such a hopeful challenge. I want you to see that this morning.

The hardest words he has to say are full of hope for them and for us. I tried to think of the most helpful way to understand this story. And I think for us this morning, just to read through this passage verse by verse and follow the story that Luke tells of John's ministry is going to help us understand where it's going.

And then we'll ask when we get to the end what particularly it means for us in our hearts, in our lives. The verses will be up on the screen. You're welcome to use it. You may find it especially helpful this morning to have a Bible open in front of you to be able to follow along.

If you want to grab one from the pew in front of you, you can find Luke chapter 3 beginning on page 858. Page 858 of the Bible in the pews.

So immediately as we start this passage, we're going to be confronted from the outset with the necessity of repentance, that it's vital how important it is.

[5 : 38] Look at how this passage starts. In the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Aecheria and Trachonitis and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness.

And he went into all the region around the Jordan proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. If that sounds a little bit like the Old Testament to you, it should.

This is echoes of the prophets, right? As John receives his particular call and message here, you've heard it over and over. In the days of kings such and such, the word of the Lord came to Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Micah and one prophet after the next in that same pattern.

And Luke is telling us that this is what's happening. Remember I told you that a prophet was coming, that God was speaking again after 400 years of no prophecy? Here he is. The word of the Lord came to John and what was God's message through John for his people?

The content of his message echoes the prophets too, doesn't it? He says repent. That's the summary of his message, a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

[7 : 10] He says your sins need forgiveness. You're wandering away from God and you need to be called back to him. This is what all the prophets have said.

They say it with different words but they've been calling God's people back to repentance. I've been reading through the prophets just this week and it hit me over and over but I should stop there and say whenever I hear somebody say, I was reading in Ezekiel this week.

I think, oh man, he's holier than I am. Honest confession. For those of you who don't know, your pastor is attempting for the first time in his life to read through the Bible from beginning to end in one year.

And I just told you that this week I was reading in the prophets, which means what? You should pray for me. I am way behind. It's not looking promising.

It's not a good thing that I'm still in the prophets. Nonetheless, God used it that I was in the prophets this week and one after another, that's what they say. They say repent. They say you're wandering after idols.

[8 : 16] You're serving your own desires. Come back to Yahweh. Bring your heart back to him. Treasure him. Almost every one of them. Let me just give you a couple of examples.

Ezekiel 14. Say to the house of Israel, thus says the Lord God. What's the word from God? Repent. Turn away from your idols. Later, Ezekiel says, I'm going to judge you, house of Israel.

Everyone according to his ways, declares the Lord God. So repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity, lest your sins be your ruin.

Come back. Isaiah in chapter 30, thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in repentance and rest, you will be saved. That's your hope.

Hope and quietness and trust is your strength. Turn back to me. Repent and that's where you'll find salvation. That's where your hope is. Joel says it this way.

[9 : 13] Even now, declares the Lord. Even now, after all the sins Joel's been recounting for God's people, after all the idolatry they've been chasing after, return to me with all your heart.

With fasting, weeping, and mourning. Rend your hearts and not your garments. Don't just come and tear your clothes. Your hearts need to be broken over your sin. Come back to God.

He's gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. That's the message of the prophets always to God's people. Turn away from your idols and yourself.

Bring your hearts back to Yahweh. Worship Him. Value Him. And that's what John's calling God's people to. He's standing out there in the wilderness saying, here's the message you need to hear. It's a baptism of repentance so your sins can be forgiven. A baptism, right? That's what John's known for, isn't it? What do we call him? John the Baptist. Not because he hates Presbyterians. [10:17] We love Baptists. John the Baptizer. The one who baptized lots of people. What was he doing? What was baptism in John's day? Well, at this time, baptism was primarily used for Gentile converts.

Why? Because they were unclean. And part of their becoming a follower of Yahweh, part of God's people, was a baptism that cleansed them from their uncleanness so that they could be with the Jews, with the Israelites.

What does John say? Who's John talking to? John's talking to Jews primarily, isn't he? He's calling the Jews to come out and be baptized.

Do you understand how radical that would be for them? You too need to be cleansed. You too are unclean. You've muddied yourselves with your sins and your idolatry.

I'm calling you to a baptism of repentance because you have sins that need to be forgiven. That's John's message. He's the prophet coming to call God's people and to say, you have something you need to deal with.

[11:28] And you need to come back to God with all of your heart. And John's not just a prophet, right? He's the prophet that the others have talked about.

The one who will come and prepare the way for the Messiah. Verse 4. As it's written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet. The voice of one crying 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 become straight and the rough places shall become level ways. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

This is John coming to talk, right? The one who's been promised. Promised. Those words you may know from the Messiah about the geographical landscape changing. Valleys raised up. Mountains brought low.

Crooked things made straight. What's that all about? It's about the Messiah having a smooth path to come to God's people. Making the way straight for the Messiah to be able to come and to be received and to be heard.

[12:32] And what does John preach to smooth the way? What's the message on both sides of these verses from Isaiah? It's repent. It's repentance.

That's what's going to prepare you for receiving the Messiah. This message of hope and promise that there's one coming that's going to rescue and deliver. What prepares you for that is knowing you need to be delivered.

Knowing that you have to turn away from something. That your hold on the idols and the things you're chasing after needs to be loosened.

So that you can turn and remember and embrace again God who loves you. John says, I want to see your hearts coming back to Yahweh.

Coming back to Him who loves you. You're His people. And realize the joy that you will find there because He's sending a Savior. Your salvation is coming.

[13:31] And the joy of that is that you need it. John says. That's the necessity of repentance. That's where John starts. Our hearts have to see the worthlessness of the things that we would hold on to and that we would chase after.

The things we value. The things we value. And thus be prepared by seeing that to value Jesus when He shows up above all else.

That's what's going on in the beginning of this passage. Repentance starts in the heart with what we value. And then when that true repentance begins to work in our hearts, it looks like something, doesn't it?

There's fruit to that repentance. We're going to get a good look at that here. Verse 7. John said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by Him, You brood of vipers!

Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And don't begin to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father. For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

[14 : 45] Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. John apparently doesn't like preaching two services. There's too many. Crowds are showing up to be baptized and John's not being very friendly, is he? All these people. Listen, you've been trying to get people to come listen to you. Here we come and we don't even get so much as good morning.

Brood of vipers! Who told you to come out here and get baptized? What's John doing? It doesn't sound friendly, but he's actually loving them.

He's caring about them. He's loving them enough to warn them against the danger that he sees in God's people that they've had to see over and over. And that's the danger of an empty religious formalism.

Of just going through the motions. God's people have never been real bad at being religious. In many ways they're known for that. But John sees them coming out for yet another religious ceremony.

[15 : 54] And he says, don't think what you need is just another ceremony. Baptism, perhaps. Even the one he's offering. Don't think just being a Jew and going through the motions of religion is enough.

Don't think repentance is just saying you value Yahweh, but then ignoring all the things that Yahweh values. John says, you need to hear me.

You can't just come into the temple and talk about loving God and then go out and ignore his commands and do whatever you please or even go worship other gods as God's people were often prone to do.

Reminds me when I think of that empty religious formalism of a famous scene from the movie The Godfather. It's a scene that's become known as the baptism murders.

You can already hear in just the name of it the dissonance. It's a very violent scene. But it paints the picture where the mafia head is having his child baptized in the church and he stands professing his faith in God, his trust in God for himself and for his family and his children while flashes go to heads of other families whose murders he has ordered to take place during the baptism.

[17 : 17] It's a very violent scene. And the contrast is there for a reason. To show that he's there in the church building with his son being baptized while the things he's professing he is showing are not true of him at all.

The people in verse 8 are tempted to say things like, Hey, listen, we're okay. We've got Abraham as our father, right? Father Abraham.

John says, Don't say that to me. Don't say Abraham is your father if that's all it is, is something that you say. Your relationship with God is not presumed upon by birth or by ceremony.

It's evidenced by fruit, by a life that values what God values. That's how you know you're in a relationship with God. That's how you know that Abraham is your father.

That's what's going on in that offertory song that we sang, right? Difficult words to sing in a worship service, aren't they? I hate all your show.

[18 : 28] The hypocrisy of your praise. The pretense. That people would honor God with their lips, even as we are, but would do so with hearts that are far from.

Is that possible? Can you sit in a room like this and have words of praise come out of your mouth but have a heart that is not there at all?

That doesn't mean a word that comes off your lips? Yes. The prophets say yes. Yes, it is. And God's people are prone to it. In Amos chapter 5, Amos says, you hate the truth.

You trample the poor. You take a bribe. You turn aside from the needy. All of those things. And as a result of that, I hate, I despise your feasts where you come and profess something else to be true. Your solemn assemblies. You offer me offerings. But I won't accept them because I know your hearts. I see them in your life. I'm not even going to look upon them.

[19 : 30] Take away from me the noise of your songs. To the melody of your harps I will not listen. Instead, let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Don't come and pretend in here with me, God says through his prophet. Don't do that in your worship. God's people have tried it through fasting. In Isaiah 58, God's people are fasting.

And he says to them, you know what you do when you fast? You're going and you're just, you're fasting and going around and pursuing your own desires to fill you up. Acting however you want. You're oppressing the workers, he says specifically, who work for you.

You're taking advantage of them who have less than you. And then you fast. That's not what fasting is about. Fasting is about your heart coming back to me. And that what happens is the bonds of wickedness are loosed.

The straps of the yoke are undone. Let the oppressed go free in breaking every yoke. Look, is fasting not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house? Isn't that the purpose of fasting, God says?

[20 : 36] To be about what I love? The things that are important to me rather than pursuing your own pleasure? It's a difficult warning, isn't it?

It's a warning for people who sit in pews like these. It's a warning to church people, isn't it? That's who John's talking to. He's not talking to the ones back in town who didn't want to come hear the prophet.

The brood of vipers are the ones who showed up to hear him preach. I mean, can you imagine that? They're the ones to whom he says, don't come out here with your hearts far from me.

Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. It's a warning to Bible Belt churchgoers. To Christians who've become very comfortable.

It's a strong warning. John says if your life doesn't reflect a love for the things of God, you don't love God. If you're content for your commitment to church services in this room, to outpace your commitment to Christian living beyond these walls, it's not genuine repentance.

[21 : 49] If your professed faith is merely professed and not practical, it doesn't mean anything, it doesn't show up anywhere else in your life, then it's not true faith.

James is pretty clear about that, isn't he? That faith without works is dead. James is concerned that we know that faith has to look like something. John doesn't want anyone missing the Messiah. He wants them prepared to see God's deliverance because they've seen their need. And I don't want any of you walking confidently out these doors and into hell because you thought mere outward identification with the people of God.

The name of Jesus showing up and saying a few things, that that was all that mattered. Hear me.

Be warned by God's word. Going through the motions doesn't get you anywhere with God.

He's not impressed by our shows of religion. It's not what pleases Him. God says, I want your heart. That's where it starts.

[22 : 56] Turn your heart back to me. And when you do, it will look like something. Repentance bears fruit. When people come back and love me, they begin to value what I value.

To love the things that I love. And it looks like something. In fact, it looks like something in every area of life. There's fruit everywhere.

There's such a neat interaction here as John continues. In verse 10, they say, What then shall we do? Okay, John. We hear you.

Tell us what to do. And he answered them, Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none. And whoever has food is to do likewise.

That's for all of them, right? This is the crowd at this point coming and saying, Tell us what to do.

And where does he start? Where does he start? With the poor. You surprised?

[23 : 55] Isn't that where the prophets always start? How do you know when you've come back to sharing God's heart? When you've started pursuing his heart again rather than the things you want?

The poor are the first ones to know. The ones who don't have. So this is a word to the haves. If you have a tunic, share it.

If you have food, give to the one who doesn't. That's what it looks like, John says. That's what it looks like when you come back to God. Not that we are running headlong after our own desires, but that our hearts come back to God.

That's for all of us. Then particular groups come to John. Verse 12, Tax collectors also came to be baptized.

And they said to him, Okay, it's got to look like something you say. What should we do? We're tax collectors. And John said, Collect no more than you're authorized to do.

[24 : 58] And soldiers also asked him, And us? What should we do? And he said to them, Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.

What should a tax collector do? Change jobs? Become a priest because they're holy, and you're wasting your time? No.

You can be a tax collector, John says. Be a different kind of tax collector. Stop lining your own pockets like is standard for tax collectors.

Stop taking advantage of the people who can't resist you like is common for soldiers, and be a soldier they won't recognize. Whose life where God has placed him is changed.

Right there. The fruit of true repentance shows up right where you are already. It may mean you're the only lawyer in town, or the only lawyer you know who doesn't stretch the truth.

[26 : 01] It may be the first one the rest of us would meet. It may mean you're the only friend who doesn't join in the gossip. It may mean you're the only engineer who doesn't cut corners and climb over others and put them down on the way to promoting yourself.

It may mean a lot of things for you, but have you ever asked yourself, What then shall I do? Have you actually taken the thing that God called you to?

And he's called you probably to more than one thing. You may be a husband and a father and an engineer, but those are all good things to put in the blank. That blank is going to be left blank. You get to fill in your own.

It's kind of fun, isn't it? Ooh, creative. You don't know what the right answer is. Fill in the blank for yourself. John says, How does it look like for me to be a repentant lawyer, doctor, engineer, retail store employee, mother, friend?

How does it change me? What does fruit look like there? What is it going to look like for the things Yahweh values to show up in my life, in my vocation?

[27 : 22] Not just needing to change and go do something else, but what about what I'm already doing? How is it going to make me different? That's what John's painting for them here. For all the people in thinking about those who have less.

For tax collectors and soldiers and any other group that would have come. Here's how it changes things. This is pretty big stuff, right? Here's the message of John saying, You need to be baptized. You need to turn from your sins and back to God. And your life needs to be changed because of it. And people say, Wow, this sounds like that Messiah we've heard about.

This must be the guy. Maybe John's the Messiah. Instead, John points to the Messiah, the Savior of the repentant.

Verse 15. As the people were in expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all saying, I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming.

[28 : 29] The strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn.

But the shaft he will burn with unquenchable fire. John, you're the preacher. You're the baptizer. I guess you've got this repentance thing figured out, right?

You must be the one. You must do it right. You're the guy, aren't you? John says, no. No, there's a stronger one. There's a mightier one coming.

And he's so great, I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals. Don't look at me. Don't get stuck here. I'm just getting you ready so that you'll know how much you need him.

There's a new hero for the repentant. It's not even John, the one who's preaching to them. There's a new hero coming. And when he does, he'll bring new hope for the repentant.

[29 : 32] Look at verse 18. So with many other exhortations, John preached good news to the people.

Just stop there. Is that what you've been hearing so far? Brood of vipers! And with many other words, John preached good news. Good news? What?

What? John was preaching good news? Gospel? Hope? Hope? That's exactly what it says, John. It hasn't sounded like good news, has it?

When we read it. It sounds difficult. It sounds like he's calling them out. It sounds like he's asking them to consider their hearts and to make religion be more about just going through the motions, but to be deeper and truer than that.

What's John been doing? He's been pulling away all their other hopes. All their other idols. Stop. Stop chasing them. Their cultural or religious pride that they may have had.

[30 : 34] Their religiosity, their outward performance and formalism. And now watch what Luke does in this story. He pulls John himself off the stage too.

Verse 19. John had been calling Herod to repentance too.

And Herod shows a side note. It's easier to shut someone up who's calling you to repentance than actually deal with it, isn't it? Herod said, I know what to do with this guy.

I am in power. You will not speak to me that way. You will go to prison. And so through this little snippet, Luke pulls John right off the stage. Here we go.

They're starting to think you're the Messiah. Nope. That's wrong. Let's get you out of the way.

Because what? What happens as John gets pulled off the stage? Jesus steps into the spotlight.

[31 : 38] As the hope. The way has been cleared through John's preaching and now through getting John out of the way. For Jesus to step into the spotlight and be the hope for the repentant in an amazing way.

Look what happens. Verse 21. When all the people were baptized. And when Jesus also had been baptized. Who baptized him, by the way? We know from the other Gospels. John. John was there, but Luke's moved him off.

Jesus had been baptized and was praying. The heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven.

You are my beloved son. With you I am well pleased. Do you hear what their hope is? Jesus. The beloved son.

The voice of God speaking. The spirit descending like a God. The trinity present. There's a new son for the repentant. What does that mean?

[32 : 41] Son is full of rich meaning. I won't talk about all of it. We'll get to some more in the next couple weeks. But in Old Testament language that these Jews would know. Saying that Jesus is the son.

The Jews would know. Who's God's son in the Old Testament? It's the nation of Israel. Is spoken of as God's son. And so we need a new Israel.

Don't we? Because we just heard that Israel needed cleansing too. Not just the Gentiles. But the Jews too needed cleansing. And here's Jesus himself doing what?

Being baptized. Baptized. But you know who was particularly God's son in the Old Testament? The king on David's throne. The Davidic king was the one who represented God's people in that special way before God.

Psalms 2 and many other places. The king is referred to as God's son. And so as the king was standing before God.

[33 : 40] Supposed to be the ideal Israelite. The one who represented God's people before him. Jesus is now the new representative of God's people.

You see some sons. Some of those kings as they represented God's people did really well. And others did really terribly didn't they? Did evil in the eyes of the Lord and so forth.

How does God feel about this new representative? What's his evaluation of him? Did he do evil? Did he do good? He's my beloved son. With him I am well pleased.

The smile and the pleasure of God finally earned by one. We've been told this is going to happen. Isaiah 42.1 says when the servant, the Messiah shows up.

He's going to be the one in whom God delights. And God says he's here. He's my son by relationship. He's the Messiah I'm telling you by the role that's been given to him.

[34 : 37] God's salvation has come. Verse 6. Everyone's going to see it. Here he is. In the person of Jesus. Salvation has come and he's here.

That's why repentance is good news. We relinquish our grasp on idols. Our pursuit of ourselves and our human ceremonies.

So that we can embrace the son. The one who brings salvation. Who gives to us salvation. And the smile of God to be ours forever. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

John preached good news. Jesus is good news himself. It's a beautiful passage.

It's a challenging passage. I tell you as I read this week. I asked myself what you may be thinking right now. Which one is it?

[35 : 40] Do I just need Jesus? Or do I need all that fruit of repentance stuff that you were talking about in my life? Pick one pastor.

Tell me is Jesus enough? Or do I need all the other stuff? What does this mean for us? I think what we learn about repentance really helps us here.

That repentance. We've learned in this passage. Begins with the heart. Doesn't it? That's the root. That's where we start. The root is valuing Jesus.

It is absolutely true that our hope is only in him. That he is all we need. Our hope's not in ourselves. It's not in our fruit production. That we do enough or perform well enough.

Our hope is in our relationship with him. That we are connected to Jesus. That's our hope. That he will perfectly represent us to the Father. So that we live today and every day and forever with the smile of God daily and eternally secure.

[36 : 44] Because it's never moving off of Jesus. So connected to him it is never moving off of you. That's our hope. Amen? That's it. And.

Not but. And. When the root of valuing Jesus is present in our hearts. We will bear the fruit of following Jesus.

Jesus. So it is true. If you don't see any repentance. Any evidence of fruit of repentance. In the way you're living. You need to heed the warning.

The warning not to work on the fruit. But to examine the root. If the fruit is not there at all. It's because the root. Needs to be addressed.

It's the relationship with Jesus that you should be questioning. Do you truly love him? Are you genuinely in relationship with Jesus? Or have you learned through your life how to pretend and go through the motions?

[37 : 45] Do you value him above all else? Are you willing to give up everything for the sake of knowing Jesus your savior? Because of the greatness and worth of Jesus Christ my Lord?

Paul says. That's the question that we all must ask. Because if you truly love him. If there's true repentance in your heart.

At the root so to speak. That relationship will bear fruit in your life. Not perfectly. But fruit. Nonetheless it will look like something.

Let me explain this with an example from marriage and we'll be done. Marriage is a relationship and it's not the only one. But it's one relationship that changes the things that we value over time.

For instance. I by nature am a fixer. I like to hear a problem. A difficult situation. And fix it.

[38 : 47] Quickly. So that everybody is happy. And we can go back to carrying on with life. Very efficiently. And everybody will be happy. Don't you love people like that? Don't they make your life easier? They fix everything up and send you on your way? Not everybody likes to work that way.

Early on in our relationship. I learned that Christy values sympathy. Listening. She's actually smarter than I am. So all of my wonderful solutions to fix her problems.

Were not things she was unaware of. She didn't need to hear them from me. She wanted to know that I cared about her. And that I understood how difficult the situation was. She knew the solution. I didn't just need to throw solutions at her.

But loving Christy and learning what that looked like meant me functioning outside of my comfort zone in that regard. It meant me learning to value entering in that relationship.

And learning to listen and love her in difficult times. It meant me learning to value that process together in our relationship more than just fixing things and having solutions and cold heart efficiency.

[39 : 55] And that was new to me. But because I love her. When I love her. My heart really is there. I want that.

Our relationship gives power in that sense. For me to put her needs ahead of mine. For me to adopt her values. Rather than the ones that are more natural and comfortable for me.

So here's the deal in our relationship with Jesus. The need for change is way greater than in marriage. And it's big in marriage.

Everything is on the table. Everything has to change. Every area of life. Right? We must value what he values. His heart for the poor. His passion for the lost.

He prioritizes time with the Father. Father. He loves seeing the values of his kingdom reflected in your corner of creation. Everywhere he's put you. It's supposed to change because of your relationship with Jesus.

[40 : 56] Your family. Your vocation. All the things we've been talking about in the fruit of repentance. They do become different. Sarah Nemitz wrote a great article for Branches.

You're going to get this in the mail this week. I'm encouraging you to read it. I'm only going to read you part of the last paragraph. It's a corporate challenge to us in this respect. She writes, I'm

desperate to move beyond trite sayings and theoretical ideas.

There's too much hurt and suffering for us to linger in meaningless talk. If we say Southwood is in the community for the community, if we're here for others, then there should be practical implications both for our corporate gatherings and for our individual lives.

So consider this reality on your way to work, walking around heyday with guests or wherever you are. Read it because there's tangible practical things in there that say it looks like something.

What Sarah's saying is we can't just talk about it. There's got to be fruit. It's got to look like something. It looks like fruit. There must be change because of our relationship with Jesus.

[42 : 00] And guess what else? The need for change is great, but there's even greater empowerment for fruit in our relationship with Jesus. Because we're not just motivated by the sweetness of my wife's spirit or Christy batting her eyes at me so that I'll do what she wants.

And that's a motivation. But rather motivated by the love of one who lays down his very life for us. Who this passage says sends us his Holy Spirit to live in us day by day, to empower us to bear fruit, fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

It's a life-changing relationship. Oh, hear me. The relationship with Jesus is primary. It is absolutely the only thing that matters for the smile of God to be on you.

But the relationship that you have with Jesus is transformative. He does that. There's no other kind of relationship with him. That's what happens when he enters into your life and shakes things up.

When he sends you his spirit to remake you and empower you for following him. So how do you deal with that? Where do you focus if you're not seeing the fruit?

[43 : 14] You focus on the root, don't you? In a marriage, it would be on valuing and loving Christ. And if I really do, things will look different. On valuing and loving Jesus.

And that will produce the fruit that we pray for and long for. As my heart turns from the lesser selfish loves back to him. You can't reverse the order. You can't go out to produce fruit and ignore that the root's not there.

You have to start with the root and the fruit will follow. One last thing. I know it's late. I hope it won't surprise you to know that I still struggle in my marriage.

That I still sometimes function as a fixer. And I fail to listen. And I fail to sympathize. And I fail to walk alongside my wife and in many other ways blow it as a husband.

I'm naturally more comfortable that way, right? I fall back into that very quickly. And while I do love Christ and that changes me, I often love myself more.

[44 : 24] That's true. It's still true. That's an ongoing struggle. That's what it looks like in a marriage that means I have to repent.

Not just one time a few years ago when I figured this out the first time. But again, probably this afternoon. I have to repent. And be forgiven.

And then be renewed in my love for her because of that forgiveness that I've received. That's actually what this passage is talking about. The good news is not that you can repent once.

The good news is a lifestyle of repentance. Remember Luther said that? And Calvin said that? And now John the Baptist has said it? And Jesus is going to say it before we get too much further in Luke? A lifestyle of repentance.

Not where you can just apologize for your sin once upon a time. But where you can live in that kind of relationship with Him. Where you can turn back again today.

[45 : 21] And need Him today. And today turn back to God. And know His forgiveness. So you repent. You turn back to Jesus and find your sins are forgiven by His blood.

Your righteousness is secure because of His perfect obedience. And the smile and pleasure of your God rests on you.

Because you know His beloved Son. In whom He is well pleased. Let's pray. Father might we repent again today.

Because it makes us so excited that we'll get Jesus. That when repentance happens the Messiah shows up. The Savior. Our hope. Oh for the joy of just having Him.

And the glory of knowing Jesus. Might we be willing to turn from our sin. And the things that we chase after. To have Him. To know your smile.

[46 : 29] Because we're in Jesus. Father when that happens may our lives never be the same. Do that work we ask in Jesus name. Amen. For more information visit us online at southwood.org For more information visit us online at southwood.org