

SERMON FOR DECEMBER 5, 2021

TEXT: LUKE 3:1-6

THEME: WHO IS IN CHARGE HERE?

In the fifteenth 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 Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, **2** during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. **3** And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **4** As it is 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. **5** 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, **6** and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

In the name of Jesus:

Luann has a sign that she placed in our kitchen recently, it reads: "My housekeeping style is best described as: there appears to have been a struggle." This sign would have aptly described my style of babysitting when we first had kids. Luann would come home and notice the house, and it would look like a bomb had hit the inside of the house. It was utter chaos. Total mayhem, but at least the kids were safe.

Who is in charge here? It is a question that many were wondering about in John the Baptist's day. When we read the Gospel of Luke, he begins with an indication of who was in charge in his day and age: It was in a time when: "In the fifteenth 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 Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, **2** during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas." These were the power brokers of that day. And if one were to look at the situation back then, it certainly didn't look like God was in charge. Caesar ruled things through his governor, Pontius Pilate. The Romans taxed their citizens to the max. Pilate, the governor, despised the Jewish people and didn't want to be in Judea. Herod was king but he had an incestuous relationship with his niece, and later would give in to the request of Herodius' daughter to have John the Baptist thrown into prison, beheaded and the head delivered on a silver platter. The Jewish population was tired of Roman rule and looked for people to help overthrow their rule. It would move anyone living during that time to say what a mess and ask the question, "WHO IS IN CHARGE HERE?"

When you look at the state of the world today, it begs the question: Who is in charge here? Because from the looks of things, it seems as if there is

utter chaos. People talk on television about not fearing the new Covid variant, that people should not panic, and yet, when they do, the stock market drops 900 points in one day, and people begin to panic. Shoppers go Christmas shopping, only to find less product on the shelves and higher prices. The packages we buy at the grocery cost the same but weigh less. Ads on television tout the advantages of buying a new car for Christmas, but car lots are empty. It makes one ask the question, "who is in charge here?"

People of any time and place can and do ask the same question. The more things change, the more things stay the same. No matter whoever is in charge, it looks as if no one is in charge. And it is our own fault, for when Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden, they were given a simple command, not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And you know what happened, they ate from it and chaos and sin entered the world. Satan asked the question, "Did God really say what He said", and by implication, did He really mean what He meant? Satan called into question God's authority and tempted Adam and Eve to question it as well, so Adam and Eve took the bull by the horns, so to speak, and they thought they they could make the decisions. They knew best, not God. They could be in charge, they could be like God. And in their disobedience, they realized their guilt and shame.

Who is in charge here, is a question that people ask today. And it looks like chaos reigns. It is because sin has entered the world, our hearts and our lives. We seek to move God off His throne and put ourselves or others on it. In doing so, we show no love for God, no obedience to Him or His commands, no fear of His wrath and no trust in His love. When we as individuals place ourselves in charge instead of allowing God to be in charge, well, all you need to do is look around at the state of things today and see the mess we have made of things.

So John the Baptist brings Good News to those of his day and to our day and age as well. John called a spade a spade, calling the self righteous a brood of vipers, essentially sons of Satan. He did it to call sinners to repentance. And He calls you and me to repentance as well. To confess our sinfulness, to confess the mess we have made of things, to admit that we have placed other things, even ourselves on the throne of our hearts and lives, to admit it, confess it, to repent of it, and to earnestly seek God's forgiveness to change us.

John's Good News is that "all flesh will see the salvation of God." John points us to Jesus, who came down from heaven, to be born of a Virgin, to be born to love the Lord with all of His heart, soul, mind and strength. To do the will of the Father by living and dying and rising again, to be the perfect price

for the payment of sin, guilt and shame. And now Jesus has ascended into heaven, sitting on the right hand of the Father, and God the Father has placed all authority in His Son, so that Jesus is now in control. “For the Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all.” (Ps. 103:19). Jesus is in control and He rules over the chaos and mayhem today in love. His will is that all be saved and come to believe in Him.

So God has brought you to faith by the power of His Spirit. You are a citizen and member of Christ’s Kingdom. You have seen the salvation of the Lord in His Son Jesus. You are called by Jesus to live by faith in Him. For when the world seems out of control, you have a different Master and a King that you answer to, your Lord Jesus Christ. You have been touched and your life immersed in His grace. Why? For the chosen purpose as Paul writes in the the Epistle lesson: “**9** that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, **10** so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” That is to say, you, who have been bought by the blood of Christ, are empowered to show the love of Jesus to others. To bear fruits in keeping with repentance. To live your life, not giving into the desires of the world or the

temptations of the flesh, but by living your life pleasing to God, or in the words of John, “ to live so that others will see the salvation of Jesus.”

Make no mistake, God is in control. Jesus sits on His throne. He is king. And He loves you. He blesses you today so that you will live your life to show the salvation that He has won for all. The proof will be in the pudding. As you trust in Jesus, your faith will show others that God loves them. And God in doing so God will receive the honor and praise..

Amen