



Matthew: Alive to God's Desire

Week 1, Sermon from September 11 Matthew 3:1-12

Matthew 3:1-12 (New International Version)

¹ In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ² and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” ³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”^[a] ⁴ John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶ Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ “I baptize you with^[b] water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with^[c] the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Start It:

- As we begin this study together, what impressions (if any) do you have about the book of Matthew?
- In your own spiritual journey, who or what helped prepare the way for you to meet Christ?
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Study It:

- Read Matthew 3:1-12 and share your initial thoughts about the passage.
- What does it mean to repent?
- Why is repentance needed for someone to draw near to the kingdom of heaven?
- John the Baptist’s clothing reminds readers of what the prophet Elijah wore. What other connections can be made between these two men?
- What compels the people to go out to the desert to meet John?
- What prompts John’s words about God’s judgment, and what role does judgment play in repentance?
- What is the “fruit” that comes from repentance?

Live It:

- What do you think gets in the way of you meeting with God?
- How might you prepare to meet God this week?

Pray It:

- Pray for one another. Pray that God would prepare your group’s hearts to be open to the kingdom of heaven. And remembering the events of September 11, 2001, pray for those experiencing loss this week and for God’s hand of healing to be upon them.