**EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME**

**GIVING PRESENTS**

**EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY’S THEME**

***Introducing the Gospel***

*John the Baptist (Luke 3:7-18)*

John the Baptist holds a prominent place in the season of Advent since he is seen as the forerunner who prepares the way for Jesus. In Luke’s Gospel John’s message is very much concerned with the quality of life with which his hearers should prepare for the coming of the Messiah. When the crowds asked John, ‘What then should we do?’ his reply was direct. ‘Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.’

The image to stimulate reflection on the teaching of John the Baptist, as reported by Luke, is *giving presents.*

***Core extract from the Gospel (Luke 3: 7-18; for reflection throughout the week)***

And the crowds asked John,

‘What then should we do?’

In reply he said to them,

‘Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none;

and whoever has food must do likewise.’

Even tax-collectors came to be baptized,

and they asked him,

‘Teacher, what should we do?’

He said to them,

‘Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.’

***Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)***

Lord Jesus Christ,

John the Baptist prepared for your coming.

Make in us generous hearts,

so we are ready to welcome you

on Christmas Day;

for your name's sake.

Amen.

**READING NEXT SUNDAY’S GOSPEL**

**Luke 3: 7-18**

John said 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 worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our ancestor”; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’

And the crowds asked him, ‘What then should we do?’ In reply he said to them, ‘Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.’ Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, ‘Teacher, what should we do?’ He said to them, ‘Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.’ Soldiers also asked him, ‘And we, what should we do?’ He said to them, ‘Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.’

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, ‘I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

**ENGAGING WITH THE THEME**

***Dwelling with the text (Luke 3: 7-18)***

Begin to explore how Luke presents the teaching of John the Baptist by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

* What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
* What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
* What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
* What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

***Thinking and talking***

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

* What do you make of John’s demand to ‘bear fruits worthy of reprentance’?
* What do you make of John’s response to those who have two coats?
* What do you make of John’s response to the soldiers?
* How does John speak of himself in relation to Jesus?
* What does this narrative say for us today?

***Using your Bible***

Compare the teaching attributed to John the Baptist by Luke with Mark and Matthew.

* Mark 1: 7-8
* Matthew 3: 7-12

Explore how the questions asked in verse 10 is a recurrent theme in Luke’s second book, the Acts of the Apostles.

* Acts 2: 37
* Acts 16: 30

Explore the roots for John’s teaching in the Old Testament.

* Isaiah 58: 7
* Daniel 4: 27

***Exploring online***

Widen your reflection on the teaching of John the Baptist, as reported by Luke, by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

* Commentary on Luke 3: 7-18
* Theology of giving
* Generosity

***Drawing on experience***

The image to stimulate reflection on the teaching of John the Baptist, as reported by Luke, is *giving presents.* Draw on your own experience of giving presents. For example:

* What have you experienced in giving presents to others?
* What have you experienced in receiving presents from others?
* What encourages the spirit of generosity?

What have you learned about giving presents?

***Creating and making***

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by the teaching of John the Baptist, as reported by Luke.

* Create a collage illustrating John’s teaching.
* Assemble a collection of gifts for the local foodbank.
* Create a poster of the work of Christian Aid.
* Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of generosity of spirit.



**EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME**

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel.

We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to smc.lesliefrancis@gmail.com.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary’s Centre in Wales.



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