

**Read: Matthew 3:1-12**

## Let's get ready for the King of peace

### **Matthew 3:1-6**

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." 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.'"

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. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Don't you hate it when you get caught doing something wrong? We don't want other people to know about our sins. We're ashamed of them, and so we try to hide our guilt so no one finds out.

But look what happened when John the Baptist arrived. John was the last great prophet that God sent to prepare people for Jesus. And as John preached, people lined up just to be able to confess their sins! They were eager to admit the things they did wrong. Imagine that!

But why?

When they heard John's preaching, they realized that they could try to hide their sins, but that doesn't get rid of them. It's like pushing a splinter deeper into your finger because you're too scared to pull it out: it's just going to make the problem worse. And they weren't there just to admit they did bad things. John was baptizing them. He was washing them with water and promising them that God forgave all their sins. That's how he got people ready for Jesus: he told them to confess their sins and told them that Jesus was bringing forgiveness.

As we get ready for Christmas, there are so many things to do: we wrap presents and get the house ready for visitors or help our family make a big dinner. Those are wonderful things, but that's not really what it means to be ready for Jesus. Do you want to be ready for him? Then be honest about the sins we've done; there's no point in hiding them and no reason to hold onto that guilt. Sometimes that's hard to do—almost as hard as knocking down mountains or straightening out crooked roads. But there's a reason why we want to get those things out of the

way: Because Jesus is coming to share forgiveness and peace with us and to wash us clean from our sins.

*The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.*

### **Questions for the Younger Children**

- What made John the Baptist look different?
- What was John's message?

### **Questions for Elementary Age Children**

- After the people confessed their sins, what did John do for them?
- What does God do for us in baptism?

### **Questions for Middle School and Above**

- John the Baptist told people they needed to repent. Why do you think so many people were eager to confess their sins?
- Why is it helpful for us to think about our baptisms?

### **Closing Prayer:**

Jesus, you didn't come to bring us guilt, but to take guilt away. You didn't come to fill me with sadness, but with peace. So help me to recognize that my guilt, my fear and my sadness all come from my sins. As I confess those sins, fill me with your peace. As we remember your birth this Christmas, give me faith that this peace is really for me. Amen.