

# *Preparing the Way*

**A Voice in the  
Wilderness**





## The Power of Story...

- Stories shape us as they draw us into their narratives
- They speak both to our intellect and our emotions/heart
- They inspire us and encourage us
- Why we prepare for Christmas
  - Reminds us of the one true story
  - Draws us back from the false narratives of our culture to the Gospel



## Preparing the Way

- Last Week...
- John 1:1-5... Who is the Light?
- The Old Testament all points to Jesus
- Not a book of unrelated stories
- Ultimately the Bible is the story of God and his most loved creation – people
- Jesus' birth was much anticipated and was God's "plan A" right from the beginning
- 300+ prophecies pointing to Jesus





## **John 1:6-16**

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of



## **John 1:6-16**

God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") <sup>16</sup> For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace





## **A Voice in the Wilderness**

- Who was John?
  - Luke 1... The birth of John
  - Zechariah & Elizabeth
    - Levite Priest
    - “Righteous and blameless”
    - Childless and “very old”
    - Serving in temple
    - Chosen by lot to enter temple to burn incense



## **A Voice in the Wilderness**

Luke 1:11-17...

<sup>11</sup> Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup> When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. <sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. <sup>14</sup> He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.





## **A Voice in the Wilderness**

Luke 1:11-17...

He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. <sup>16</sup> He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup> And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”





## **A Voice in the Wilderness**

- Who was John?
  - Zechariah has doubts
  - Gabriel, the angel, closes his mouth
  - People all know he has seen a vision but he is unable to speak
  - Elizabeth becomes pregnant
  - Elizabeth meets with Mary
  - John born – Zechariah's mouth opened



## **A Voice in the Wilderness**

Luke 3:2b-6...

...the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>4</sup> As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:





## **A Voice in the Wilderness**

Luke 3:2b-6...

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.

<sup>5</sup> Every valley shall be filled in,  
every mountain and hill made low.

The crooked roads shall become straight,  
the rough ways smooth.

<sup>6</sup> And all people will see God’s salvation.””



## **A Voice in the Wilderness**

John 1:29-34...

<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."





## **A Voice in the Wilderness**

John 1:29-34...

<sup>32</sup> Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. <sup>33</sup> And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."



## God wants to draw us into His Story

1. The stories of our culture are strong
  - Consumerism, selfishness, temporary happiness, comfort, money, personal fulfillment, power, wealth, recreation
  - Leave us full of despair and disillusioned
  - Broken promises





## God wants to draw us into His Story

1. The stories of our culture are strong
2. God's story restores our hope
  - Reminds us of his power, purpose and trustworthiness
  - Full of grace and truth
  - People will take note of the hope you have that comes from God's story



## God wants to draw us into His Story

1 Peter 5:15...

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect





## God wants to draw us into His Story

1. The stories of our culture are strong
2. God's story restores our hope
3. God's invitation to you is to enter in to his story
  - Stop chasing the false narratives of our culture
  - Embrace the life and light offered
  - Use your preparation for Christmas to draw you into his hope and love

