

■ READ: Matthew 3:1-6

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,

make his paths straight.'"

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

■ REFLECT:

A lonely voice is carried down the centuries by a dry desert wind: *Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight!*

The voice prophesied by Isaiah is growing louder, clearer. Its source is coming into view. It is John the Baptist, calling out to the people of Israel. The years of waiting made the people nearly forget about God's promise to send a Savior, someone who would redeem the people from their lives of misery, sin, and oppression. But John the Baptist is here to refresh their memory. You might have forgotten, but God hasn't! A Savior is on the way.

John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus Christ to come. He invites the people to be baptized in preparation for Jesus's arrival. The people confessed their sins and were washed clean.

Like John and the people he baptizes, we can prepare for Christ's coming. We can confess and repent of our sins. We can ask God to make us clean, fit to be in the presence of our Savior.

■ PRAY:

Lord, would you point out the places in me that are a mess? The places that are making it hard for me to encounter you? I confess those sins to you. Make me clean. Prepare my heart to welcome you. Amen.