

BEGIN WITH  
CONCL.

## THE PREACHING GOD BLESSES

Matt. 3:1-12

Intro: Certain men in Scripture and out of Scripture stand out as great preachers -- great because of the way in which they were used of God. None of us have really lived to see the kind of a ministry such as characterized the preaching of Spurgeon, or of Whitefield, or of the Reformers -- to name just a few in the history of the church.

Of all who are mentioned in the Bible, one of the most unusual apparently had a rather brief ministry, but it was marked with special blessing and unusual success. That was the ministry of John the Baptist.

After the Lord began His public ministry, John's ministry began to diminish. In John 3:26 we have seen where John's disciples were concerned about this.

If you were to link all of the ministries together, you would not find that they were all blessed the same way. Jeremiah was without doubt as faithful as John the Baptist was, but how different were the results which the two men saw! So we cannot measure the ministry of any man in terms of numerical results, but every man blessed and used of God gives us an opportunity to determine the preaching that God blesses.

That is especially true when the record we have is a divinely inspired record such as we have in Matthew 3 concerning the ministry of John. WHAT WERE THE OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS MINISTRY?

Before answering in detail, there are certain facts we need to recognize:

- 1) We cannot overlook the plan and purpose of God for any man. This is obviously different for every man.
- 2) We cannot ignore the times in which he lived. With John it was preceding the coming of the Messiah -- a most unique time in the world's history!
- 3) Nor can we close our eyes to the kind of a man each preacher was -- especially gifted for the work that the Lord had called him to do.
- 4) Sometimes a special message for a special time.

What about John's ministry?

I. First of all, let it be noted that HE PREACHED.

This means that it was a spoken ministry, a vocal ministry, a public ministry. This is in contrast with the printed page, or discussion groups which have become so popular lately. Preaching is the public declaration of the truth of the Word of God where one person is the speaker, but where

any number could be listening -- from 1 on up!

The important characteristic of preaching is that it is a positive declaration of truth!

John the Baptist preached! See 1 Cor. 1:18, 21.

II. IT WAS PREACHING THAT CALLED FOR REPENTANCE.

This is more than just preaching against sin; it was preaching that called for a renunciation of sin, for a break with sin, for a changed life.

This is why John was not satisfied with the coming of the Pharisees and Sadducees. See vv. 7, 8.

III. IT WAS URGENT PREACHING.

John said, " . . . for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In other words this did not have a lot of time to act on what they were hearing. The preacher recognizes the shortness and uncertainty of life, and he also realizes that the coming of the Lord could take place at any time.

IV. IT WAS GOD-CENTERED PREACHING.

John does not talk about the good life.

He does not promise them all kinds of blessings for the here and now.

He laid before them the necessity "to flee from the wrath to come."

The Lord must grow very weary of our man-centered preaching. You would think to hear much of our preaching today that the main issue in salvation is what we are going to get -- not what it takes to satisfy the righteousness of a holy God!

V. IT WAS PREACHING THAT WAS BOTH BOLD AND HUMBLE.

If a preacher is to be true to his calling he cannot be swayed by what people want to hear, nor by who the people are to whom he is preaching. At the same time, he must be like John describes himself in v. 11 -- recognizing the greatness of the Saviour, and his own unworthiness as the Lord's servant.

VI. IT WAS PREACHING THAT EXALTED CHRIST.

You see part of that here (in vv. 11, 12). You see more of it in John's Gospel -- e.g., John 1:29.

Concl: But, you say, why tell us these things when most of us will never be preachers?

The answer is clear -- and there are several parts to it:

- 1) The Bible has a lot to say about preaching -- and the record of many messages is given.
- 2) It is evidently important for the purity of the ministry that the people of God know what they should be getting, and then make sure that they get it.
- 3) We are told in Scripture that this is God's way.
- 4) It will help every believer in his own witness -- to do even on a personal basis what John the Baptist did publicly.
- 5) It will help us to pray.

May the Lord bring us back to the realization of the absolute necessity that the Word of God be preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our programs, our celebrities, our performances -- place them along side of the Word of God, and you will see how far we have strayed from the pattern that the Lord has given us in the Word of God.

2 Tim. 4:2.

- 6) It will guide us in our giving.