

**THE BIG IDEA: We're either making the way or we're in the way.**

### The Take-Off

This morning we're going to be spending time in the first half of Luke chapter 3, and we're going to meet the grown up version of John - the baby who leaped inside his mother, Elizabeth's, womb earlier in the book.

We actually did a series on John - known more famously as John the Baptist (or the Baptizer) a couple years back, and it might be worth your time to go to the sermon archives on the website this week and check it out. It's full of all kinds of background information that we just won't have time to dive into this morning.

But before we start reading, I need to introduce you to a tool that many people are familiar with in other parts of the country and the world, but you may not have ever seen or heard of.

That tool is the snowplow, and they can come in all shapes and sizes.

Here are just a few.

[PICS OF SNOW PLOWS]

Like I said, all shapes and sizes, but snowplows have one purpose: clear the way for what's coming behind it.

They also have a sad reality: if you get in their way, they're going to snowplow you!

As we take a look at John the Baptist this morning, I want you to remember that he was a snowplow for Jesus, and so are you and I.

We're either snowplowing or being snowplowed!

To say it another way - and this is the Big Idea today - we're either making the way or we're in the way.

I want you to be like John - I want you to make the way for Jesus, not get in the way of Jesus!

Trust me, Jesus is coming in power and glory, and we want to be on the right side of that!

So, let's read Luke 3:1-20, and then I want to share 5 steps that can ensure you and I are making the way and not getting in the way.

[Read Luke 3:1-20]

### 1. Making the way requires SEPARATION

- a. Don't know if you noticed this or not, but John received his call in the desert (v. 2) and then he preached the call in the desert (v. 4)
- b. We don't know this from Luke, but we do know from Matthew that he ate differently and dressed differently.
- c. In other words, he was different, and separation was key to him hearing from God and being used by God
- d. God tends to speak to us when we are set apart from distractions, or at least, we tend to hear him then

### 2. Making the way requires PREPARATION

- a. No one likes to prepare: it's time consuming and it's not nearly as much fun as dreaming.
- b. I love how Jeff Kapusta says it. He's the pastor at Lifepoint Church in Wilmington and one of our overseers. He says the difference between dreamers and doers is what happens when we wake up!
- c. John was called to make the way - to blaze the trail.
- d. Here's what we know about the preparation phase:
  - It isn't glamorous
  - It isn't quick
  - It isn't fun
- e. Way makers level things, they fill in the gaps of injustice, they smooth over the rough places so that everyone can see God's salvation (that's Jesus!!)

### 3. Making the way requires ACTIVATION

- a. I love how some people collect gift cards - are you one of those?
- b. You've got a wallet full of gift cards that have never been used, and even if you did try to use them, you wouldn't be able to because you've never activated them
- c. When John preached repentance as the means to begin preparing ourselves for Jesus, the people got it
- d. John said it like this in verse 8: "Produce fruit in keeping with your repentance."
- e. He continued with even stronger words: "It isn't enough to have access (Abraham is our father!) if you aren't actually going to use it, and it will be taken from you!"

- f. 3 times people asked the same question: “What should we do?” (vv. 10, 12, 14)
- g. Not once did John respond with, “Just believe it in your heart.”
- h. He said, “Don’t let fear make you a hoarder, don’t let greed make you a cheater, and don’t let power make you corrupt.”
- i. In other words, making the way requires activation; it requires that we do something, and probably something different from what we were doing.
- j. We need to start seeing repentance as the proof of a new life instead of the punishment for an old one.

#### 4. Making the way requires EXALTATION

- a. Yes, I know, I’m on the 4th straight “-ation” word. I’m not trying to appear smart. It may be a disease!
- b. Anyway, if we’re going to make the way and not get in the way, it will require the exaltation of Jesus.
- c. John understood this, and so when people got all caught up in what he was doing and he had the chance to become “the man,” he refused.
- d. He told them plainly in verse 16 that Jesus was coming and was far more powerful than he was
- e. JESUS is the one we’re making the way for! We’re not making the way for The Gathering, or Pastor Paul, or anything else.
- f. In fact, we aren’t even making the way TO Jesus as much as we’re making the way FOR Jesus to get TO us.
- g. It’s all about him, and when we keep that at the forefront of everything we do, we’ll experience step 5:

#### 5. Making the way naturally leads to the MINIMIZATION of us

- a. Again, you can find the whole story in Matthew’s gospel, but the result of John making the way for Jesus is that John ended up in prison and eventually executed
- b. The bigger Jesus got, the smaller John did
- c. What’s crazy is that John was okay with that, and we need to be, too
- d. John 3:30

#### The Landing

When it comes to bringing Jesus to our city, we’ve got to ask ourselves whether we are making the way for him or getting in the way of him!

I love the way one of the commentaries put it about making a way: When a king traveled the desert, workmen preceded him to clear debris and smooth out the roads to make his trip easier. In Luke the leveling of the land was a figurative expression denoting that the way of the Messiah would be made smooth because through John a large number of people were ready to receive Jesus’ message (cf. Luke 1:17).

Martin, J. A. (1985). Luke. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 211). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

We’re snowplows, and Jesus needs a snowplow!

What we do and how we live for Jesus goes a long way toward making the way smooth for Jesus.

Like John, we go before him to remove obstacles between Jesus and people, and then we allow Jesus to do his work

We never want to get in the way of that.

Instead, we want to make the way for that.

Let’s pray.