

Prepare the Way of the Lord

When we prepare, making ready for Christmas, how do we feel?

- Advent: a time of waiting to celebrate the coming of Jesus our Saviour into the world and of thinking ahead to His second coming
- Shopping for food and presents
- Hospitality
- Giving and receiving cards and presents
- Family visits, Christmas meals
- Christmas carols, Bible readings and prayers
- Clearing the clutter to prepare our home, Christmas tree, lights and decorations

Malachi 3 (NLT)

3 “Look! I am sending **my messenger**, and he will *prepare* the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming,” says the LORD. ² But who can endure the day of his coming?

- *Who is this coming messenger?*
- *How and when can we act as a messenger of the gospel in the coming weeks?*
- *Can we keep Jesus at the centre of our family gatherings and celebrations?*

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How does John’s baptism message prepare the way for Jesus?

Luke 3:1-3 (NIV)

John the Baptist prepares the way

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar – when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene –

² during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³ He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

How do today’s ‘Christmas preparations’ compare with the attitude of the shepherds and the wise men who came simply to worship and adore the promised Saviour?

**‘Adore, come let us adore, O come let us adore Him!
The Lord, worship Christ the Lord,
Let all that is within us Adore.’**

What difference does the presence of Jesus make in our lives?

Luke 3:15-16 (NIV)

¹⁵ The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered them all, 'I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'

What can we learn from John's attitude?

John 3:28-30 New International Version (NIV)

²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' ('I am here to prepare the way for him.')

²⁹ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.

³⁰ He must become greater; I must become less."

Prepare *the Way of the Lord*

Isaiah 55:6-8 (NIV)

⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.

⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.

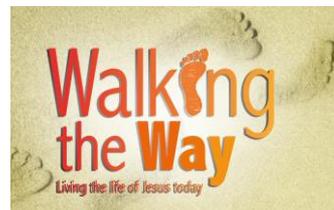
Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

⁸ "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the LORD.

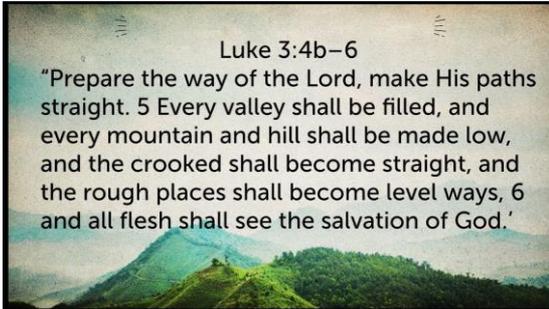
John 14:6 (NIV)

⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

- The early Christians were called 'Followers of the Way' in Acts 9 and Acts 24.
- How do we find the way?
- And how do we keep Walking the Way?



Prepare *the Way* of the Lord



- A challenge to open our hearts to the way of the Lord, with full surrender.
- Valleys are low places in our lives - worries, grief or doubt - to be filled with awareness of the presence of Jesus, God with us.
- Mountains in our hearts include pride, prejudice, fear, selfishness – when these are brought low we can see the way of the Lord through grace and love.
- Making crooked ways straight means confronting temptations, clearing the clutter from our minds and taking steps to deal with any major issues.
- Making the rough places smooth means forgiving those who have hurt us and refusing to be controlled by what may have happened to us in the past.

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Philippians 1:9-11 (NIV)

⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

- Let us reflect on anything that has particularly struck us from this message.
- And let us pray that God will continue to be at work with His transforming power in our lives.
- This presentation includes references to an online message by Rev Dr Wiley Stephens: <https://day1.org/1610-uncluttering.print>

