

## Mark: The Story of Christmas Requires Our Repentance

**Opener:** Have you ever had to admit you were wrong about something before you could fix it? If so, what?

**Scripture:** The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, <sup>2</sup>as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” — <sup>3</sup>“a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

<sup>4</sup>And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. <sup>6</sup>John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup>I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” <sup>9</sup>At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” <sup>12</sup>At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, <sup>13</sup>and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. <sup>14</sup>After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. <sup>15</sup>“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” Mark 1:1-15

They came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.” <sup>27</sup>To this John replied, “A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. <sup>28</sup>You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’ <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>He must become greater; I must become less.” John 3:26-30

### Discussion Questions

1. John was Jesus’ cousin, but more importantly, God worked through him to get the world ready to recognize who Jesus was and to hear what He had to say. How did John “make straight paths” for Jesus? Mark 1:1-3
2. What does “preaching a baptism of repentance” mean? How would that prepare the way for Jesus? Mark 1:4
3. What made John so popular at the time? Mark 1:5
4. What’s significant about the way John described the One who was coming after him? Mark 1:7-8
5. Given that baptism symbolizes new life after repentance, why was Jesus baptized if He was sinless? Mark 1:9
6. How was the Trinity revealed during His baptism? Mark 1:10-12
7. Later as Jesus began to draw larger crowds than John, John’s disciples seemed to want John to do something to become more popular. What stands out about his response to them? John 3:26-30

**Wrap Up:** Although God’s word reveals His holiness, more than anything, it’s His kindness that leads us to repentance. Then as He reveals His holiness to us and we see the utter depth of our sin in light of His holiness we feel a mix of deep sorrow and incredible joy—sorrow over our sin and joy over meeting Jesus Christ. That’s when we surrender to the fact that we are not God and have no business trying to play as though we are.