

DENAIR FRIENDS CHURCH

Devotions with Matt

April 21, 2020

BRAND NEW

“There was just something different about him.” I can hear all those who went out to the countryside to see John the Baptist say those words. Matthew makes a point to speak about his crazy clothes and unorthodox diet. P.T Barnum made his living by people being drawn to an oddity- and willing to pay money to see it. Musical artists are usually big hits when they are different from the mainstream. Someone with blue hair seems to stand out in the crowd. John the Baptist was odd, but was it his odd-ness that drew the people to him or was it his message?

Odd for odd's sake might draw people to them, but it won't keep their attention for long. It wasn't John's oddness that got him killed by Herod- it was his message to him. It wasn't John's weird clothes that brought Jesus to him to be baptized in the Jordan- it was his message in preparation of Jesus' arrival and start of His ministry. And it wasn't his diet that brought the crowds out to the middle of nowhere- it was his message that something new was coming.

Something new. We like the sound of that. A new car sounds good. A new house is wonderful. A new baby is a huge blessing. But what is it about new-ness that we like so much. It could be that we hope something new will last a long time. Something new is shiny and clean and it feels like a reward. Something new just makes us feel good. Marketers know this and are always looking for ways to promote something new, something better, something that will make our life new and better. Fortunes are made on new.

But here is John the Baptist, out in the middle of the desert, proclaiming something new was about to arrive. But it wasn't a new car, a new house or a new iPhone he was hawking. What he was preaching was new though. He was preaching new life, a new way and a new family. He was preaching something that money just couldn't buy. Maybe that's why the downtrodden, the hurting and the poor made the trek out into the desert. They were looking for something new that was not available to them before.

But this newness that John was offering wasn't going to be easy to obtain. No marketer or advertiser would have touched this with a ten foot pole. What was being offered- new life and new family- could only come thru death. John's message of new-ness can only come thru confession (of sins) and repentance. We like to think of repentance as doing a 180 degree turn. We turn from our old ways to a new way. We turn from our old lives to a new life. We turn from ourselves to Jesus. And while that is true, it is only partly true. Repentance means a putting to death. Not only do we turn from our old ways, life and self, they all must be put to death. They must be not only baptized into Christ and made new, but they also must be crucified with Christ, dead and buried, in order to be raised to new life. New-ness in Christ comes no other way.

The crowds who went out to see John the Baptist were wanting something new. John prepared the way for that new-ness. Jesus is that new-ness. It might be that in the quarantine time we are all going thru that there is a desire for something new. We want life to be better than it was before. We want true peace, true joy and true love. We want people to treat each other better. We want safety and security. We want new. Maybe this virus



FOR I AM ABOUT TO DO
SOMETHING NEW. SEE, I
HAVE ALREADY BEGUN!
DO YOU NOT SEE IT?
I WILL MAKE A PATHWAY
THROUGH THE WILDERNESS.
I WILL CREATE RIVERS IN
THE DRY WASTELAND.

Isaiah 43:19

in some way is like John the Baptist preparing us for something on the other side, something new. His message was confess and repent. His message was turn to Jesus. His message was our old life must be put to death in order to be made new. Maybe this virus is pointing out all the old things we have been holding onto. Maybe it is pointing out all our old ways that we don't like. Maybe it is pointing out our old life where we tried to have all things new in our own power. Maybe the virus is pointing out that those old ways just aren't working for us. Maybe it is pointing the way to Jesus in whom all things are made new. Maybe it is time to get rid of the old and accept the new.

John was a voice calling in the desert. Now Jesus is the one calling us to Him. Will we turn to Him, crucify the old and accept the new? New-ness comes no other way.

“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” Isaiah 43:19

In Christ,

Matt