

Year B 7th Sunday after Pentecost 11/07/2021 – we are called to call people to repent.

Mark 6:18,20

For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

The very last verse, of the last book, of the Old Testament, that’s Malachi, says: *I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the Fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their Fathers;*

Elijah is going to turn hearts.

I want you to believe me that the Hebrew word for “turning hearts” is “Shuv” which is the common Hebrew word for “repentance”.

If I were to translate this text I would say: Elijah will cause the father’s to repent to their children and the children to repent to their fathers.

Malachi is pointing to a time when fathers and children will be reconciled.

Maybe like this:

“Children we the have not taught you the ways of God. We have not helped you keep your faith. We have not taught you the law. We have not told you about the Messiah. We are truly sorry, we ask your forgiveness”

“Fathers we forgive you!”

“Fathers, we have mocked you. We have left your people and married foreigners against your will. We have turned our back on you, and more so, on our God. We are truly sorry, we ask your forgiveness.”

“Children we forgive you.”

This is the promise made in the last verse of the last book of the Old Testament – Malachi. Now the people wait and wait – for that promise to come.

Exactly 400 years later a child is born a son is given – who’s that?

Jesus? Yes, but also Jesus cousin, John the Baptist

From that ancient promise in Malachi to the birth of John there was 400 years of silence – nothing from God – that’s why there are no more books after Malachi.

That intertestamentary period was called the “silent time”, *in silentio Dei* in latin or as Luther says: *das Schweigen Gottes*, The silence of God.

During that time people were wondering?

Where is God? Why doesn’t he speak?

400 years makes people look forward to a voice.

400 years later a man called John came and said: I am a voice – “repent the kingdom of God is at hand”.

The silence of God is broken.

Straight away the people remember the promise of Malachi: *Elijah will come and bring about this reign of repentance.*

So, what did they say to John? Obvious?

You’re not Elijah – you’re John?

Jesus clears this up for us perfectly in Matthew: “Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: ‘What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.” I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; ...And if you are willing to accept it, **John is the Elijah** who was to come.’”

So, John is the Elijah that was promised.

Just by the way.

Zechariah, John's Father could not speak, he was mute, he had no voice.

When John was born the proud Zechariah wanted to tell the world about his new born son – but he had no voice.

So he asked for a whiteboard and a Texta – and he wrote “his name is John”. And from that moment on he could speak – he had a voice.

John is the voice – his very first word in ministry was “Repent”.

Jesus very first word in ministry was “Repent”.

What is repent?

This is repent? (Movie clip) <https://youtu.be/Rb5xXcPjWSI?si=XcdVjcRj0xwTBuhd>



One of the French words for repent is ‘Converte’.

It means to change into something else.

The French foreign Legue would march their soldiers to the edge of a cliff – they dare not falter.

Marching, Un, Deux, trois, quatre, marching to the edge of the cliff and at the last minute the sergeant would shout, rather *le sergente* would shout “Converte” – and the soldiers would turn completely around on the spot.

Repent means to turn around – go the other way.

The original Greek word for repent is Meta-nous (metanoia) – it means “with your nous” – in other words change your mind.

Repent is to change your mind.

“I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”

Turn away from evil, Turn toward Jesus, Change you mind, fill it with Jesus words – make a straight path for the Lord – no obstacles – no twist and turns – a freeway – free of the rubbish in your life.”

Do you have obstacles in the way of you coming to Jesus.

Do you have twist and turns that lead you away from Jesus – from Church.

Pastor Paul and I were lamenting how many people who are, youngish, highly mobile, have a faith background, but don't come to fellowship with us – the number is way more than you people sitting here?

What do we do? We know we can't please everyone. We know we easily can displease

most people – one simple mistake, one bad day, one moment of forgetfulness.

Yes, we concluded, we can displease much, much, easier than please – funny about that, displeasing is a piece of cake in the church.

But really what do we do about all those people?

“John the voice” simply said “repent”.

It’s a call that may or may not be well received.

I think I have told you about my truckie mate who was doing all the wrong things on the road – wasting his money, gambling his money, carrying on with women (he was married). His behaviour was really burning me up. I really loved him but I could see him going down the drain.

I wanted to say something. I prayed for the right words – I went to him as he was unhitching his trailer.

I said, “Hey Gilesy, the way you’re going someone else is going to be bringing up your kids” – that’s it.

Many, many years later he said to me; “those words you said to me that night saved my marriage and probably my life” –

They were God’s words. I didn’t know it was a call to repent.

But he turned his life around, he changed his mind, he is still married. We are still good mates.

It’s doesn’t always have the happy ending.

There was another bloke I know who had an affair with his stepbrother’s wife. Now if that’s not bad enough the step-brother’s wife was also this blokes full niece.

He’s crossed the line all over the place.

What would you say to him? Leave her alone! Repent!

John simply said, “*Herod what you are doing is against the Law*”.

John was talking about the Jewish law – so he really said, “*Herod what you are doing is immoral in the eyes of God*”.

As we know Herodias this lover, this niece, was wanting to get “ahead” in life – she wanted John dead one way or another.

She tricked her sexy dancing daughter into demanding John’s head on a platter.

Calling Herod to repentance had a bad outcome for John.

BUT who knows – if Herodias didn’t get involved it could have been a totally different outcome.

It says “*Herod feared and honoured John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man he John put in Jail to protect him*”.

400 years of silence and “The Voice” that came from the wilderness lies dead.

Is this futility?

I believe this is a message to show us that the call to repentance is of the highest order – we are “called to call” even in the face of danger – that is how important it is.

Repentance is life saving.

“*those words you said to me that night saved my marriage and probably my life*”.

The “call to call” is vital.

Remember: Jesus’ very first word in ministry was “Repent”

John’s very first word ministry was “Repent”.

What is your very first word in ministry today, tomorrow?

Of course, the call to repent can be abused – spoken in a accusing tone – as if you a right and good and the other person is wrong and bad.

Repentance is from love, a call to save.

I’m sure you’ve seen that weird little man holding a sign that reads, “Repent! The end is near!”

His message is well intended.

He wants us to turn us away from sin to God. His message is meant to save us.

Repentance is God's gift of restoration to us.

It's God's call to us, through Christian brothers and sisters, to acknowledge our sin and turn to him for forgiveness.

Repentance is discovering the sinful person you are by comparing our life to God's perfect law and the Holy person God is.

Repentance is knowing you and God will never meet unless there is someone to make it right.

Repentance is being sorry for our sin and asking Jesus for forgiveness.

Repentance brings joy and freedom.

Peter says it in a nutshell, "*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*" (Acts 3:19)

Did John fear calling king Herod to repentance? I'm guessing he did – but it didn't stop him – it cost him his life.

It is our "**calling to call**" – the promise is that your brother or sister in Christ will: *have their sins wiped away, and receive times of refreshing from the Lord.*"

What is that worth to you?

Hey who said this – seems just right for us today?

You're the voice, try and understand it

Make a noise and make it clear

We're not gonna sit in silence

We're not gonna live with fear

John "the voice" Farnham.

The "call to call" is your gift to save.

Lord we thank you that deep inside us we have the words that can change people's hearts. Give us the strength to say the right words and the right time – so all people enjoy the blessing of forgiveness and refreshing with you. Amen.