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Daily Devotional - Monday, October 7, 2024 - A Coat of Camel's Hair

OCTOBER 07TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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As an English teacher in China, my (future) wife Julia attended a banquet hosted by her university. There the leaders urged her to sample a local specialty—fried silkworms. To refuse would have been rude, so she put on a smile and downed part of one of these unusual delicacies. How did it taste? No comment.

Given his diet of locusts and honey, John the Baptist would likely have enjoyed the fried silkworms more than Julia did. In addition to his unusual diet, a distinctive of John’s ministry was his clothing, made of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist. Camel’s hair was rough and uncomfortable. Wearing it evoked poverty and simplicity and reminded people of Elijah (see 2 Kings 1:8). John wanted no one to think that he sought to obtain followers or riches (see Luke 7:25).

John the Baptist’s core message was: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (v. 2). His appearance and lifestyle reinforced this idea. In God’s plan, his role was to be the forerunner prophesied by Isaiah, preparing the way for the Messiah (v. 3). The best way for people to prepare would be by turning from sin and purifying their hearts. His audience confessed their sins and were baptized (v. 6). In that context,

baptism was a sign of commitment to change their lives in accordance with their repentance.

John also prophetically rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees (vv. 7–10). Why were they there? Out of curiosity As religious tourists? Because John was “trending”? They were “vipers.” Given that they had failed to “produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (v. 8), they had an even greater need to turn from their sin, although most did not do so. The Messiah will one day separate the wheat from chaff (vv. 11–12)!

Is the “fruit” of your life “in keeping with repentance”? Or, as other translations put it, “consistent with repentance” or “worthy of repentance”? Does your life show that you’ve turned away from sin?

Merciful Lord, today we join the prayer of King David: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me” (Ps. 51:10, 12).

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