



"Repent and Believe"

Mark 1:15

4 Steps to Preparing for Jesus

Read: Matthew 3:1-12

During one of my visits to the schools, a young student asked me how he should get ready for the coming of Jesus at Christmas. At that moment it occurred to me that our preparation for Christ's arrival is the same no matter what season or age of life we find ourselves. In this week's gospel we are given the answer to the question.

The first step is to "repent". In fact, both John and Jesus tell us this is the fundamental first step (Mark 1:15). We are all sinners and we can't be forgiven unless we ask for mercy (1 John 1:9). The good news is God offers us mercy through Jesus. Once we repent we can move onto the next step.

The second step is to orientate our lives in accordance with the Kingdom of God. But what is the Kingdom? The Bible tells us that the Kingdom is about doing the will of God. In other words, it is about aligning our behaviours with how God wants us to act. Our actions bring about the Kingdom.

The third step is to "bear fruit worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8). St. Paul says we need to "do works giving evidence of repentance" (Acts 26:20). Repentance is about changing direction and showing it by our actions.

The fourth step is asking Jesus to send his Holy Spirit to dwell in our lives. The Holy Spirit guides our lives and helps us to discern and follow the will of God. The Holy Spirit helps us "bear fruit". This is the mark of a disciple.

These are the steps the Bible tells us to take. How important are they? Well, John informs us that if we fail to enact them we run the risk of eternal separation from God (Matt. 3:12). Jesus' arrival is all about saving us from the dangers of sin. Our job is to prepare our hearts to accept Christ.