

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths

How do we prepare the way of the Lord? How do we make straight His path? (Matthew 3:3) We prepare as John the Baptist urged us to prepare - to repent and be baptized. We are called to repent from the many things that distract us and hold us back from the great love that we were created to enjoy. By repenting we turn away from the things that will never make us happy and fulfilled. By being baptized we put to death that which keeps us from the wonderful healing, loving presence of the Lord. (Col 3:5) Notice that we are baptized. We never baptize ourselves. After we are baptized for the first time God provides countless ways for us to put to death our rebellious self to death. In others who offend us and duties throughout the day that need to be completed. Uncomfortable situations always seem to pop up when we least expect it. Could it be the Lord offering us an opportunity to die a little bit to ourselves so that He might live in us? (As He died that we might live.) As we enter the Church, each time we make the sign of the cross with Holy Water it reminds us of our baptism and that we must continue to die so that we might live. This is how we prepare the way of the Lord.

How do we “make straight His paths?” What is this all about? Imagine you knew the Lord was coming to visit you this week. What would you do to get ready for His arrival? Now imagine He is at the door right now! What would you do? “Wait a minute, Lord!” as you scramble around, throwing old magazines and laundry in the closet and quickly tidying up your life. Most of us aren’t ready for a heavenly visit right now. We find ourselves saying, “Someday I’ll pray more, or go on a retreat, or read the Bible, or at least read some inspirational books.” But someday isn’t on our agenda yet. We want to see some movies or hang out somewhere or just have some fun before we let the Lord through our door. We think we know what is best for ourselves and what would make us most happy. The Lord might have us doing some work we wouldn’t enjoy in some place we don’t want to be. “Wait Lord, don’t come in yet!” We lay a crooked path for the Lord to reach us. The Lord is meek and humble. He patiently waits for us. Often it takes a crisis to bring us back to the Lord’s feet.

It took the death of my mother before I looked at my life and said, “I don’t want to live this way anymore.” Then I was ready to make a straight way for the Lord to my heart. And He was ready to walk on that straight path to my heart and heal me and show me how to live a more abundant, wonderful life. He has poured so much grace and love upon me. He wants me to do things that my talents help me to do well. He wants me to be in a place where I can live in His presence and share His wonderful, healing, abundant life with others. He prepares me to live in His love and give His love to others. What could be better than that?

This is how we make a straight path for the Lord. When we really realize how much we need the Lord then we make a straight path for Him to our heart. This is why Jesus said, **“Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.”** (Matthew 19:24) Not just rich in money, but more often rich in comfort and ease. This is where my life was. I had many distractions of comfort and ease that I served. The more I leaned on my “riches” of comfortable ways the more I twisted up the path

of the Lord to meet me. But when we realize our weakness, our shortcomings, our great need for the Lord, He is always there to heal us. We become humble. **“Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.”** (James 4:10) I saw my unfulfilling life and cried out to the Lord, and like He did for the lepers, He reached down and raised me up and exalted me to a wonderful life in His presence and fulfilling service. Not always easy, but joyful, fulfilling and meaningful. And humility is always there to guide me back to His side. Humility is the doorway to the Kingdom of God. Humility makes a straight path to the Lord.

We turn around. By the Lord’s grace, we die to that which separates us. In humility we reach out to the Lord. Then the path is straight for the Lord to help us, nourish us, and show us the best way to go. Facing the Lord, in the loving presence of the Lord, humbly desiring the Lord’s guidance, we are ready when He does visit us and knocks on our door. **“Be like servants who await their master’s return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. And should he come in the second or third watch and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants.”** (Luke 12:36-38) And the tools for readiness are close at hand. Humble yourself. We can do that. Pray constantly for the grace to die to our sinful nature. We can do that. This will continually bring us back humbly before the Lord as we cry out to see His Love that is stronger than all other attractions. Humility makes us ready. Then we grow close to the Lord who gives us the strength to do all things that we must do in life. (Philippians 4:13) As we prepare for the Lord, we prepare to do wondrous and amazing things that the Lord created us for. Those who repented and were baptized by John the Baptist, soon saw the amazing miracles of Jesus in their midst. As we prepare the way of the Lord, we prepare for the miracles of Jesus in our lives. We prepare for the miraculous life God created us to live. Prepare for miracles. **“Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these.”** (John 14:12)