

Not Safe, But Good

Luke 3:1-20

CALVARY OLD TOWN 5/6/2026

Announcements

VBS Prep days - Fridays, 10AM to 3PM

National Day of Prayer - Tomorrow at noon at Victorville City Hall

Introduction

Recap

As the assistant pastors and elders have had the opportunity to teach, we've been going through the Book of Luke. Luke has been going back and forth between the story of Jesus and the story of John the Baptist. Last Wednesday, John Dydel taught from chapter 2 where we got a glimpse into the life of Jesus as a child.

And the last time I taught in Luke, we went over the birth and calling of John the Baptist. We saw how God had placed a special calling on His life to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry. John's father, Zacharias, had some doubts, but ultimately comes around and gives his son over to whatever God has for him.

And it's fitting that I left off on John's story, because we're going to pick back up in Luke 3, where Luke once again shifts his focus to John the Baptist.

The Setting

Dark Days

Luke 3:1-6

'Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' '"

Our text tonight opens in the region around the Jordan River as John baptizes people there.

Picture 1: here is a picture of what that would look like. Not a very glamorous river, yet the place that John saw fit to call people to repentance.

Picture 2: here is a picture of me baptizing Steve in the Jordan River. Yes, I suppose you could say we are like John and Jesus here.

Picture 3: and here's a picture of Steve and me riding a camel in Israel. Not relevant to tonight's text, but a great picture nonetheless.

Back to Picture: let's go back to the first picture so people aren't distracted by this. This is what the geographical landscape looks like.

Luke also lists a bunch of names for us here at the beginning of the story to give us the historical and political landscape.

The list of names in verses 1 and 2 has two functions that help us understand the text. First off, these names help ground the story in reality. The names and historical figures listed here are real people. So the story of John the Baptist and what happens here in Luke 3 is not a fairy tale or folklore. Luke wants his readers to know these are real people in real places who really did these things.

Archeologists and historians have verified that these people lived and ruled during this time period. And maybe not many of you came tonight questioning the validity of the Scriptures, but I think it's important to remind ourselves that the events of the Bible really happened. They aren't just stories. And Luke wanted us to remember this as well.

The second thing this list of names does is show us the political and religious climate of John's day. David Guzik writes that Tiberius was known for his cruelty and severity; Pontius Pilate was known for his brutal massacres of the Jewish people. Herod, Philip, and Lysanias were also known for their cruelty and corruption.

So this was the political climate of the time. Rulers were corrupt and cruel, and barbaric, especially toward the Jewish people. Israel is occupied not unlike Austria being occupied by the Nazis in World War II. Things are tumultuous and dangerous and unjust.

Luke also lists two high priests to show the religious climate of John's day. There was only supposed to be one high priest, but the political corruption seeped into the religious system and so they ended up with one official high priest and one who had more political sway over the religious elite.

So this is the temperature of John the Baptist's time. A time full of chaos and corruption, both politically and religiously.

Man in the Mirror

And John the Baptist comes on the scene in verse 3:

Luke 3:3

And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins

So in the midst of all this turmoil, John comes on the scene, and rather than saying “look at this mess. Look at all the corruption - “they” are the problem!” He looks at the people gathered around him and he says “you are the problem”. And he calls for repentance and he starts baptizing people as a symbol of their repentance.

That doesn’t mean John ignored the corrupt leaders causing problems. As we’ll see later, he confronts them and that gets him in trouble. However, he doesn’t allow the people in front of him to disregard their own sinful nature and their own contributions to the problem at large.

When you’re living in a world where everything seems upside down and everything seems wrong, it can be tempting to blame our problems on everything and everyone else. But here, John doesn’t let the people do that. He calls them to repentance. And if he were to step onto our scene and come to America in 2026, he would see a lot of problems, and then still point the finger at us and call us to repentance.

And we’ll look more at what repentance looks like later on but basically, repentance is thinking differently about a sinful behavior and allowing that to change our behavior. John is calling for introspection and then a change of actions for the individual.

In Romans 12, Paul says

Romans 12:18

'If it is possible, as much as depends on **you**, live peaceably with all men. '

Both John and Paul are emphasizing the personal obligation we all have to live rightly before God and people. Jesus does the same thing. People are constantly wanting Him to overthrow Rome. But instead He teaches about the individual’s heart and says we need to overthrow the evil residing there before anything else.

That doesn’t mean that there aren’t problems out there caused by other people. It just means that we can’t ignore our own hearts and our own lives in what we can be doing to make the world around us a better place.

Herald & Trinity

Now John’s call to repentance is a part of a larger mission he has to prepare the way for Jesus. Luke shows us this by quoting from the Old Testament in verse 4:

Luke 3:4-6

'as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ ”'

Isaiah is writing about someone who will go before the Lord and prepare the way for him.

Back in that time, when a king would travel with his entourage, he would send a herald ahead of him to the cities he was planning on visiting. This herald would get people excited about the king’s arrival, and head up construction to fix the roads leading to that town. Roads weren’t

made for a king's entourage and were filled with obstacles and obstructions and so those paths would have to be cleared for the king to travel through.

Luke sees John the Baptist as that herald for King Jesus.

Trinity

Now, kind of a side note, notice that the quotation from Isaiah doesn't say to prepare the way for the Messiah, it says to prepare the way of the Lord. In the original language, that is Yahweh. Isaiah was writing about the one true God of Israel. So as Luke identifies John as the herald from Isaiah, and John as preparing the way for Jesus, Luke makes the clear claim that Jesus is God.

That's not quite central to what we are talking about tonight, but there's some extra credit for you guys. My daughter actually asked me to explain the Trinity last night. I was basically like "I don't know. It's kind of like an egg. But the metaphor breaks down because God isn't three separate parts He's one being but also three." It's a mystery.

But it's one that the Bible is clear on. Jesus is God. And it is only by Him being God that He could forgive us our sins when we choose to repent.

The Message

So John is preparing the way for King Jesus. He is doing so by repairing the roads in people's hearts. By calling them to repentance. So they can start to remove the obstacles in their hearts so Jesus has a clear path to them.

He does so by preaching what we read starting in verse 7:

Luke 3:7-9

'Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? **[what an opening statement]** Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'"

So John comes out the gate hot, calling his hearers a brood of vipers. They are coming to him to repent and be baptized and he's calling them names! Imagine if Pastor Gary called people up for prayer and to receive Jesus and when they get up here he's like "You snakes! What are you doing up here?"

It's pretty crazy. John was very radical. He had a specific calling. I don't think everyone needs to be this abrasive.

And John knew these people. He knew they loved pretence without substance. That they loved religious rituals that were empty and didn't mean anything for their hearts or for their lives.

Vipers

And calling them a family of snakes recalls the first snake we see in the Bible. The deceiver who came to Adam and Eve and convinced them to doubt God. To doubt His word and doubt that God had their best intentions at heart.

God told Adam and Eve that they could eat of any tree in the Garden except one. He gave them everything they needed to live and to flourish. But the snake, the deceiver came along. He asked them “did God really say?” He put it in their ear that God was holding out on them.

And up to this point in the story, God has declared something to be “good” seven times. But now we see the humans defining good and evil on their own terms because they mistrust the goodness of God, and they commit the original sin.

And this is the source of all sin. At the root of anything wrong we do, lies the fact that we are mistrusting God and instead trusting or loving something or someone else above Him.

That is why Martin Luther said that the first commandment is the foundation of all the rest. He said that a violation of any of the other nine commandments is a result of violating the first.

The first commandment being:

Exodus 3:20

“You shall have no other gods before Me.

Martin Luther said:

“[W]here the heart is rightly set toward God and this commandment is observed, all the other commandments follow.” - **Luther**

When we treat God as the ultimate Lord of our life, then we will trust His Word. We will trust that His commandments and instructions are what’s best for our lives.

Conversely, when we disobey one of God’s laws, it shows that we fear, love, or trust something greater than God. Whenever we sin, like Adam and Eve, we are saying that God doesn’t know best for us or doesn’t want the best for us and we need to look elsewhere for our source of fulfillment.

And that is what John is saying about the people coming out to be baptized. He says they are relatives of the snake who deceived the humans ages before.

Sons of Abraham

And the thing these people are trusting in is their heritage. The religion itself passed down through their family line.

John says to them in verse 8:

Luke 3:8

‘Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ’

John understood that many of these people were trusting their lineage or their nationality over actually trusting God. John is saying that is not enough. It is not enough to be a part of Abraham's family.

John says God could create children to Abraham from the stones around him. This phrase is reminiscent of what Isaiah said:

Isaiah 51:1-2

"Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, You who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, And to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father, And to Sarah who bore you; For I called him alone, And blessed him and increased him."

Here, it is like God is saying, remember your humble beginnings. I took Abraham from a rock and formed him into a great nation. I chose Abraham and your ancestors when they were nothing and I am the one who blessed them and turned them into this great nation. So don't trust Abraham, trust the one who made Abraham great!

That is what John is telling his listeners. It is not enough to trust in Abraham or in their relationship to him.

And the same is true for us. It is not enough to be born into a Christian family. It is not enough to be born in a "Christian Nation". It is not enough to even go to church every week.

John is saying that our trust can't be in any of these things. Our trust has to be in God and in Him alone.

Fruit

Because when our trust is in anything other than God, like Luther said, then we will begin to disregard the Word and the commandments of God. It was because these people here trusted in Abraham that their lives were filled with empty rituals with no substance.

John won't let them treat his baptism the same way so he tells them to bear fruit worthy of repentance.

It's important to note here that repentance, and the fruit associated with repentance are actually two different things. While closely linked, there is an important distinction between the two.

We see a similar distinction in Acts:

Acts 26:20 Paul said that he

'but [he] declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.'

Repentance, and the works associated with it are two separate things. Repentance, first, is the change in our minds and in our hearts toward God and sin. It is allowing God to define good and evil for us rather than us trying to define it on our own.

Once that has been done, then we start actually changing our behavior. We stop doing the things that are wrong and start doing the things that are right.

Again, these things are closely related, but it is actually dangerous to our spiritual health if we mix them up. If we start with behavior modification and focus on what we are doing or not doing - we end up with legalism. We end up with good behavior for the sake of good behavior.

But if we understand this rightly, we allow God to first do a work in our hearts. Then our behavior flows from the love and trust we have for God rather than a ethical to-do list.

SOTM

This is why, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches about getting rid of the root of sin in our lives. He talks about the heart. He talks about adultery in the heart and murder in the heart. He talks about the motives behind charity and prayer saying that these things should be done in secret lest we start to do them so people think more of us.

First and foremost Jesus is concerned with our heart. With our motives and desires and values. Our hearts. And that is where repentance takes place. Once our heart has been aligned with God's heart, then the fruit worthy of repentance comes. Then the behaviors come.

Judgement

And John is going to give his listeners specific examples of what those behaviors look like. But before that, he talks about what happens if they refuse to truly repent:

Luke 3:9

'And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'

Reality is, is that there is judgment for those who choose not to align their hearts with God and treat Him as Lord of their lives. For those who refuse to obey God's life-giving law will experience chaos in this life and in the life to come.

And in order for us to escape the destruction that we would bring on ourselves, we need to repent. We need to allow God to change our hearts and our minds to align with His. We need to recognize how desperately we need Him. How lost we are without His guidance and instruction in our lives.

One pastor put it like this: "[The gospel says that] you are more sinful than you could ever dare imagine - and you are more loved and accepted than you could ever dare hope..." - **Tim Keller**

The gospel shows us how sinful we are and in what great need we are but it also provides the solution in Jesus that He would love us enough to come and remedy our situation for us.

The Application

And in preparation for Jesus, John shows these people their need for repentance. And people repent and ask what they need to do:

Luke 3:10-14

'So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."'

So John lists for them specific examples of what it looks like to have truly repented. Again, these acts, these ethical behaviors are not repentance in and of themselves. If so, John would have been just giving them more laws to follow in their legalism.

However, in preparing the way for Jesus, John is asking for a deeper repentance that first changes the heart, then changes the outward behavior.

Generosity

The first example of outward behavior is not complicated. He tells them to be generous with what they have. That for people who have extra clothing and food to share their resources with those who have less.

And although this is not complicated, it can still be difficult for us as believers to be generous with our resources. However, if we have first repented, and allowed God to do a work in our hearts, generosity will be one of the natural byproducts of a changed heart.

Because if we love and trust God above all else, we won't be afraid of losing our resources. We won't hold so tightly to the things He has given us because we trust that He will take care of us.

If however, our god is money or security or our job or even ourselves, then we won't want to be generous with what we have. We are convinced that we worked hard for it. And if it runs out we are the ones that will have to do whatever it takes to earn it back and provide security for ourselves.

But when we trust God as the ultimate source of security and abundance, then we are free to treat others the way God has treated us.

When David is receiving donations to build the temple, he says this:

I Chronicles 29:14

'But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You.'

David knew that they were just giving to the Lord what He had already given them. He is the ultimate provider and in giving back to Him, they were trusting that He would continue to provide their needs.

Testimony

When I left my job as the Worship Pastor at Calvary Apple Valley, I knew very clearly that the Lord was calling me out of there, but I did not know where He was calling me to. I didn't have a clear word from Him on where I would end up or how I would provide for my family. I stepped out in faith, trusting that He would take care of my family - but I also felt immense pressure to find a job as soon as possible. I have somewhat of a background in computer programming and web development so I go to work on brushing up on those skills and trying to find something remote that would provide income.

However, also during that time, I was spending a lot of time here at the church. There is a lot to do around here and we were busy and Josh and I were finishing up Exalt United's first album. And I wasn't promised a job here, the resources weren't there but I knew I wanted to serve.

And I remember constantly asking the Lord if I was doing the right thing. I felt my calling as a pastor clashing with my calling to be the provider of my home.

And as I was wrestling with this, I met up with a friend for coffee and he shared something with me that brought clarity to my situation. He said that the Lord had shown him a long time ago that the man is not the provider for his household. God is the provider for his household.

And that brought a huge sense of relief. That I could just trust God. He is the provider.

And yes, men are supposed to work and lead and do their best to provide, but ultimately, God is the provider. So if God was telling me to spend lots of my time volunteering at the church, I could trust that He was going to take care of me and my family because I was doing His will.

And obviously things worked out and the church was able to eventually bring me on staff. However, I spent almost a year waiting for this result. And in the meantime, God was so faithful to bless our family. God would send us money to provide for us when we weren't expecting it. And multiple times when I would question if I was doing the right thing, I would be on the cusp of ending my volunteering time at the church and instead start locking in on web development, money would appear out of nowhere and God would miraculously provide. And each time I knew it was Him confirming what He had spoken to me.

Generosity Conclusion

So generosity, whether it's with our time or our resources, first comes with the heart posture that God is going to provide all that we need. When we understand that, we are able to hold our time and resources loosely. Because we trust that God will take care of us no matter what.

If we try to be generous simply because we're told to, and without the correct heart posture, we end up with legalism. Rules for the sake of rules. But when we repent, and allow God to change our hearts so that we trust and love Him, our generosity flows from relationship with God, not legalism.

Which is why Paul says this:

II Corinthians 9:6-8

'But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.'

Our generosity toward God and others flows from His generosity toward us.

Taxes and Soldiers

Next, John will give two more examples of what the fruit of repentance looks like:

Luke 3:12-14

'Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."'

Here, John addresses specific behaviors associated with these professions. Tax collectors were given much leeway on how much they could collect from people. And in their greed they often took more than what was necessary.

And it appears that the soldiers were often tempted to abuse their power to intimidate others into getting what they wanted.

And John says, if the tax collectors and the soldiers are truly repenting, then they will stop their selfish corruption. They will instead, treat people fairly and treat them as they would want to be treated.

This kind of behavior falls directly under what Jesus said are the greatest commandments:

Matthew 22:37-40

'Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'"

When these tax collectors and soldiers become convinced of God's love for them, it will cause them to love their fellow citizens in the way that they have been loved.

Sacred vs Secular

Something I like about this example, is that John doesn't tell them to quit their jobs. The problem is not the job. The job in and of itself is not sinful.

And I think this is important to note because we sometimes elevate certain vocations over others. Like being a pastor or a missionary is more important than being a school teacher or an accountant. That's not what the Bible teaches.

The Bible teaches that God has called certain people to be pastors and teachers so that everyone else can be equipped to do the work of the ministry:

Ephesians 4:11-12

'And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, '

To God, every occupation can be ministry. Every occupation is an opportunity to serve Jesus when you work unto the Lord. When your job is done with integrity and you are a light to the people around you.

If God has called you to be a pastor or missionary, then praise the Lord. If God has called you to be a school teacher or an accountant, praise the Lord. We are all just supposed to do what God has called us to do with the gifts He has given us. No occupation being better than the next.

You might not be a tax collector or a soldier, but as you allow the Lord to change your heart, you will bear fruit worthy of repentance in your context, and in doing so, will be doing ministry wherever you work.

And as John gives these three examples of fruit resulting from repentance, it's not an exhaustive list. We all have different ways in which we love God and love our neighbor depending on where God has us at the time.

Holy Spirit and Fire

And what is great about this, is that we don't have to manufacture this fruit on our own. We have the help of the Holy Spirit. Which is what John mentions next.

Luke 3:15-17

'Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.'"

John's baptism was with water. It was an outward symbol of an inward reality. John says, however, that when Jesus comes, He will baptize with the Holy Spirit. This will be something that changes us from the inside out.

In Acts 19, Paul found some disciples in Ephesus. And in verse 2:

Acts 19:2-6

'he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. '

We know from Scripture that not all believers receive the gift of tongues and prophecy, but the point here is that something supernatural happened as Paul prayed and these believers received the Holy Spirit.

It is God's Holy Spirit that gives us the supernatural strength to repent and continue to bear fruit worthy of repentance.

And people have strange beliefs about the Holy Spirit, and because of that some people have been hurt or weirded out by the idea of the Spirit.

But Paul presents it very clearly and naturally in Galatians:

Galatians 5:22-23

'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. '

It is the Spirit that helps us to produce the fruit John is talking about. When we ask Him, God Himself dwells in our hearts through His Spirit, changing our hearts and thereby changing our behaviors.

Fire

John also mentions a baptism of fire. And he mentions this idea of Jesus getting rid of what is not necessary in the harvest. The Holy Spirit is our Helper but He is also sent to convict and to judge the world:

John 16:7-11

'Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.'

Like I mentioned earlier, there is judgement waiting for those who do not repent and do not allow their hearts to be aligned with God's. When this happens, when people choose to live contrary to God's will, they wreak havoc in their own lives and in the world around them. And when they die in that condition, they are given over to that chaos they have wrought and will experience it for all of eternity.

But the alternative is right there. Jesus is not far off or hard to reach. Following His will is not always easy, but it is always worth it.

John's Fate

John demonstrates this truth with his life in this last portion of our text:

Luke 3:18-20

'And with many other exhortations he preached to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.'

John, in his boldness, confronted Herod about his sinful relationship with Herodias. And as a result, was imprisoned and ultimately, was murdered.

While he's in prison, Matthew tells us that he begins to doubt whether or not Jesus was truly the Messiah. From prison, John sends two of His disciples to Jesus and this is how Jesus responds:

Matthew 11:4-6

'Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

Jesus is telling John, "look at what you are apart of. Look at what you paved the way for. People are being healed, the dead are being raised, the poor are receiving good news."

And as John was in prison, perhaps in despair over his circumstances, Jesus reminds him that it was all worth it.

Following Jesus and obeying Jesus is not always easy. But it is always worth it.

In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis, one character (a beaver) is telling a girl named Lucy that someone is coming to help set things right.

"Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he- quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"... "Safe?" said Mr Beaver ... "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

C.S. Lewis - The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

Following Jesus isn't easy. There are things that feel unsafe. But when we know that the King is good, we find the courage to follow Him wherever He leads us.

Conclusion

I'm sure it wasn't easy for Noah when God asked him to build an ark. For years he labored, most likely ridiculed by his neighbors. But through his obedience, God brought salvation for his family and for humanity.

Abraham didn't want to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. But through His obedience, Abraham witnessed the miraculous provision of God, he didn't have to go through with the sacrifice, and he demonstrated this incredible display of God's love for us.

And Jesus didn't want to go to the cross. On the night He was betrayed, in Luke 22 He prayed in the garden:

Luke 22:42-44

'saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.'

Yet despite this, He prays "not My will, but Yours, be done."

Jesus gives us the ultimate example of what it means to be obedient to the Father. To have no other God above Him. No other allegiance.

And He did it for us. He endured the cross, separation from the Father so that you and I can have a relationship with Him. So we can receive grace and forgiveness.

This is how we can be generous. By looking to the One who held nothing back from us, as He gave His life.

This is how we can love God and others well. Because love was on full display for us on that cross.

This is how we can be a light in this dark world. Though things may seem hopeless around us, we stay focused on what we can change in our own lives, knowing that any sacrifice we make for Him is worth it.

And we receive His help. He offers us His Spirit guide us, motivate us. Ask that God would fill you with His Spirit tonight to equip you to repent, recognize God as God, and live wholeheartedly for Him.

Because He's worth it.