

Today's text comes from the gospel of Jesus Christ written in Matthew 3:1-12. It introduces us to John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea and calling everyone to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." The theme for this morning is: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is Near."

What is Repentance? To repent in Greek is "Metanoia," meaning "to change the mind." Repentance means to change your mind about something. It has to do with the way you think about something. You've been thinking one way, but now you think the opposite way. That's repentance—the changing of the mind.

To repent means to stop being focused on the things of this world. It means to stop ignoring God. It means coming to God personally by asking Him to forgive us for having a real relationship with Him. And it means getting rid of whatever in our lives stops us from having that relationship.

Later, verse 6 mentions that people were "confessing their sins." They were admitting the wrongs they'd done and asking God's forgiveness. To repent means to apologize to God. It means to stop making excuses and blaming our situation or others. It means to stop living in denial but humble ourselves by owning our sins and taking responsibility for it.

To repent, James 4:8 says, "Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." When we repent, we start seeing sin the way God does. Instead of loving it, we start to hate it. It's not a once-in-a-lifetime thing; it's a lifestyle. To repent means to keep struggling against our sins and coming to God for forgiveness, no matter how often we may fail.

John's message for the people of Jerusalem and Judea, the Pharisees, and Sadducees were to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This message is simple but very challenging. This message is for everyone, including all of us here at Kona. It's a message of great hope, even for the most sinful people. John prepared people for Jesus by giving them this message. As John prepared the way for Jesus, we're called to do the same (Mark 6:12). "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." Let it be so for us today. Amen.