

St Paul's Dorking Small Groups: Dec 11th 2005
Preparing the way ...The ministry of John the Baptist
Isaiah 61:1- 4, 8-11, John1.6- 8, 19-28



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon:

- **Key thought:** The ministry of John the Baptist was a signpost to one who was to come...He was a herald, ushering in the expectation of the messiah...but what type of Messiah was he to be?
- John the Baptist saw his ministry as one who pointed to Christ...in effect a signpost!
What are the characteristics of a signpost?
 - It has authority
 - It informs and testifies
 - It demands action

"He came as a witness to testify concerning the light" John 1v7
- **John had authority:** *"You my son will be called a prophet of the Most High for you will go before the Lord to prepare a way for him" Luke 1:76*
- **John informed and testified:** *"He came as a witness to testify to the light" John 1:7*
"Look the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" John 1:29
"I have seen and I can testify that this is the Son of God" John 1:34
- **John demanded action:** *"He came as a witness to the light so that through him all men might believe" John 1:7, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is near" Matt:3:3*
- As we think of the context of the ministry of John the Baptist it is good to reflect on *"Life in the wilderness"* ... John was a voice to those who had lost hope, lost their way and were confused for their future...He pointed to the ministry of one who was to come...
- **The ministry of the one who was to come...**We often think of Jesus' ministry purely in terms of his act of salvation and his victory over sin and death...However our passage in Isaiah shows us the ministry of Christ in much deeper, wider and pastoral terms ... His ministry is to the poor, the broken hearted, those in darkness and distress, those who mourn, those who are distressed... to those he will bring Good news!

Questions to discuss:

- **Ice Breaker/Welcome:** What are you most excited or expectant about at this time? ... When was there a time in your life when you most felt expectant? (Perhaps any mothers in the group could avoid the obvious!)
- Read John:1 6-8, 19-28. What strikes you most about our passage today?
- When we think of how John was a signpost to Christ is there some help we can gain from him in the witness that we give to Christ? How can we be good signposts?
- **"The wilderness years"**...Can we share times in our life when we have felt in the wilderness? How did our hope in Christ help?
- Read Isaiah 61: 1-4. What does this passage say to us?
- Do we sometimes think of the ministry of Christ in too narrower terms? He forgives us our sins...but we fail to let him minister to us more deeply?
- End your study together with prayers of hope and praise based on Isaiah:61:10-11