

Sermon for December 2, 2018  
"When Did It Start?"

Luke 3:1-6

When did it all start? “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturae'a and Trachoni'tis, and Lysa'ni-as tetrarch of Abile'ne, in the high-priesthood of Annas and Ca'iaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechari'ah in the wilderness; and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” According to Bible Scholars it was about the year 28 AD.

Luke tries to be precise about the time. He refers to six different prominent figures from the Emperor in Rome to the High Priest in Jerusalem. This is significant because the God of Eternity had chosen to enter into time. The omnipresent God of the universe was appearing at a particular place. The Kingdom of the Eternal Universal God was about to be manifest in a remote province of Rome at a particular point in history. Put simply, Jesus was about to begin his public ministry.

But it really started long before that. Over 400 years before, Malachi had said that God was sending a messenger to prepare the way. Over 200 years before that, Isaiah had foreseen a voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord!” Of course they were both prophesying about John the Baptist who was chosen by God to prepare the way for Jesus. But it all started long before then.

When did it all start? It all started in the Beginning. I mean the Beginning beginning, as in Genesis. In the beginning God made the world and all that is in it including humanity. And all of it was good. The woman and the man walked with God in the Garden of Eden and they lived in peace and harmony with all creation.

That was the way God wanted it, but this changed. The man and woman chose to disobey and everything changed. Suddenly the humans were separated from God. Instead of being at peace they were in constant turmoil. Not only were they in turmoil with each other and the world around them, they experienced an inner turmoil between the purpose God had created them for and their separation from God.

From there things got worse. The people grew further and further from God. And, because they were separated from God, their turmoil with each other grew worse. As a result all forms of abuse and persecution were born. Crime after crime were committed. Murder and war came into being, and the inner turmoil grew

worse. People began to hate themselves, or maybe to worship themselves. That is when it all began!

So what is the “it” I am talking about? It was God’s plan of salvation for all creation. From the beginning it was God’s plan for us to live in fellowship and harmony with our maker and all creation. So God sought to set things right. But to do it God had to bridge the distance. Humanity had been separated and could not reach God, so God reached out to us.

God sent the Son to become one of us. The royal heir of all heaven and earth came to live as a carpenter’s son. It was God’s eternal plan for him to experience first-hand the alienation and turmoil of humanity. He would be despised and rejected and sold for mere silver. Then he would be tortured and executed like a common thief.

This is where John comes into the plan. It was his place to prepare the way for people to recognize and receive him. To be a voice crying in a wilderness of alienation, injustice, and sin, “Prepare the way of the Lord.” So that hearts separated from God could once again walk in fellowship as in the beginning. So that the turmoil in people’s hearts and lives could be healed and transformed into peace. So that injustices could be made right and people liberated from oppression.

When did it all start? Well, from God’s perspective that question is irrelevant. Sure, God planned to save humanity from the beginning when the first sin was committed, and God sent the Son at a particular time and place to be born the King of the Jews, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Also God sent John in 28 AD to prepare the way for the Son. God will send the Son again on that Day of Judgment and salvation at the end of time.

But from God’s eternal perspective all those events are part of a single act of Salvation. So when did, or does, it all start? It starts here and now. Jesus came into the world 2,000 years ago, but Jesus also comes into our lives each day. Jesus will come to you in some special way in the days ahead so get ready.

Jesus is coming to bring judgment and reconciliation. He will see our sin and offer the healing of his blood shed on the cross for all time. Jesus will see the injustice of our world and will offer liberation and a cure for the blindness of hate. So get ready for Jesus is a-comin’. Be prepared to meet your maker in your times of devotion and prayer this season. Cleanse your hearts and get ready to hear God’s voice in the music and Christ’s face in the decorations of the Christmas season.

It all starts here and now. And I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness. “Prepare the way of the Lord. Jesus is coming to judge and heal, to liberate and set free. It’s about time, so ya better get ready!”