



## Sermon-based Small Group Guide

# Week of December 13 *For Whom Was John the Baptist Hoping?*

**Scripture:** Matthew 3:1-12

## Sermon Summary

Matthew describes John the Baptist as a prophet along the lines of the OT prophets, come to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. John the Baptist spares no one from his message of repentance and transformation, for the power, holiness and righteousness of the One to come is undeniable. John's words cut through our defenses and our posturing, our self-justification and sense of superiority. They teach us that the Messiah alone has the power to judge hearts and lives, and teach us to hope for the Messiah's coming, so he might put us in our right places. (In fact John's message was so dangerous to the rulers at the time, that he was arrested and put in prison.)

Later in Matthew's gospel, we learn that John doubted whether Jesus was the one to fulfill this role! Even John had trouble matching the reality of Jesus with his expectation of a righteous and powerful judge. With the Holy Spirit's help we can learn to expect Jesus' coming and prepare by our glad repentance.

## Reflection Questions

1. John the Baptist stood out by his strange clothing, food, and ways. How do you think today's Christians should stand out from the world? Do you stand out from your neighbors in any way that marks you as a Jesus follower?
2. Have you ever been glad to confess your sins? What do you think "glad repentance" looks like?
3. Many of the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to John likely counted on their heritage of faith to justify them. Do you ever find yourself relying on your education, your cultural heritage, skin color, economic or social status, or other secondary aspects of yourself, to make you acceptable in others' eyes?