Pastor Dave Teixeira
October 11, 2009
Matthew 3:1-17

Please use the space below to take notes on today's message:

Take It Homework

We encourage you to not only do these exercises on your own, but also with a group of friends, co-workers, neighbors, small group or family members.

We find a pretty "in your face" challenge in Matthew 3:2 - "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

- What do you think this means? What did it mean then and what does it mean now? What does it mean for you personally?

In an interview I read recently a Pastor Matt Chandler said that God "is unbelievably aggressive when it comes to putting sin to death." He also said that when he first became a believer, no one told him how "ruthless Jesus was going to be once He took over [his] heart."

- How do you experience this concept in your relationship with Jesus? Do you have that same urgency about the sin in your life? What kinds of things cause urgency in your heart about the sin in your life?

In verse 6, Matthew describes a scene at a John the Baptist baptism. He uses the phrase, "confessing their sins." Part of repentance is confessing your sin. And, I think He means to each other! Wow! Really? Pretty tough stuff...at least for me.

- Why do you think it's important to confess our sins to each other? Why do you think confessing in general is so central to repentance?

- Who is someone you can and will confess your sin to? (This week!)

Last week we talked about posers—people who put on a show and pretend to be something they're not. In verses 7-10, John sees some Pharisees and Sadducees coming and, knowing that they're posers, calls them out on this. They were just there to look holy, spiritual and godly. I think this is why I so often say from the pulpit, "I'm a sinner," "I'm not perfect," "I need grace and forgiveness." I understand first-hand the pressure to try to "look" spiritual, and I don't want to be "that guy!"

- Why do you think God rejects hypocrisy?

Verses 11-13 talk about water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism. There are a lot of side issues here. Matthew's point is that if you get baptized with water and there's nothing behind it, it doesn't mean much. It's not magic. You can't earn or "get" the saving grace of God. It doesn't matter who your dad, friend, church or pastor is (sorry, no riding my coat tails). It wouldn't matter if you flew to Israel and got baptized at the very place where Jesus did. It wouldn't even matter if John the Baptist baptized you himself. It is about the One "who will come [Jesus] who is more powerful" than just rules, rituals and religious ancestry. The "Kingdom of Heaven" that's near is about the baptism the King offers. It's about Jesus, His death and resurrection, and your identification with that. It's about having the Holy Spirit—God's living and active presence—in your life.

- Talk about and wrestle with these principles.