

CROOKED OR STRAIGHT

“As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation.'" (Luke 3:4-6)

Everybody knows the difference between crooked and straight. That difference is easily recognized both in highways and people. It is been said that rivers are crooked because they take the easy way around obstacles, and people get crooked the same way. You know that is true! We call some people “crooks” for good reason. They have abandoned the straight and narrow and meander through life avoiding difficult responsibilities. John the Baptist made a straight path, not for himself, but for Jesus Who was yet to come. The task would not be easy.

If you travel to Arkansas on highway #71 you can see road construction in progress. Even small mountains present a formidable challenge. Millions of tons of rock and dirt must be moved to make the highway straight. Each time you cross a river or stream the contrast is dramatic. The highway is straight and smooth and the streams are crooked and rough.

Jesus said about John the Baptist: **“What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.” (Luke 7:24-26)**

The theme of John’s preaching was repentance. The Gospels repeatedly remind us that John came preaching repentance (Matt.3:2; Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3; etc.) As we have said before, his task was not easy. A sample of John’s preaching is found in Luke 3:2 - 20 and reflects the mountain moving nature of his ministry. He demanded that those who had possessions should share with those in need (v. 11). He told the tax collectors to stop collecting unjust taxes (v. 13). He ordered the soldiers not to extort money, or accuse people falsely, and further commanded that they be content with their wages (v. 14). He even rebuked Herod for marrying his brother’s wife and for all of the other evil things he had done (v. 19). Accepting Jesus is not easy for it involves a revolutionary change of life. Most will find the cost too great and take the easy way that leads to destruction. Jesus reminded us that the road that leads of life is strait and narrow and only a few will find it (Matt. 7:14).

John the Baptist did not make a straight path for himself, and neither do we. Our efforts invariably involve those who follow. This is the way that the Living Bible paraphrases Heb. 12:13: **“and mark out a straight, smooth path for your feet so that those who follow you, though weak and lame, will not fall and hurt themselves but become strong.”** Please prayerfully consider the words of this beautiful poem:

THE BRIDGE BUILDER

An old man, going a lone highway, Came, at the evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast, and deep, and wide, Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim; The sullen stream had no fears for him;
But he turned, when safe on the other side, And built a bridge to span the tide.
"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim, near, "You are wasting strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day; You never again must pass this way;
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide - Why build you a bridge at the eventide?"
The builder lifted his old gray head: "Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There followeth after me today, A youth, whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm, that has been naught to me, To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim; Good friend, I am building the bridge for him."

Will Allen Dromgoole

