

Not What We *Should* Do, What *Can* We Do?

Intro. Should-a, would-a, could-a. Those words indicate a choice that we didn't make for some reason and have second thoughts about. We feel unsettled, even guilt. That can be a sign for us to reconsider the choices. Obviously, some can't be undone. For the ones that can, it takes courage to reconsider them. Repentance and forgiveness are often a necessary part of these moments. In response to John's preaching some of the people seem to be re-assessing previous decisions in their lives.

I. We know how fast interesting or juicy news spreads. The gossip network will always be faster than any 5G network. John attracted a lot of people. Some thought he might be the Messiah. He quickly stopped that idea. In his gospel, Matthew mentioned that Pharisees and Sadducees came forward for

John's baptism and John called them "a brood of vipers" for their hypocrisy. Luke doesn't mention them specifically, but he does use the same disparaging description of some in the crowd. We assume Pharisees and Sadducees were there, eager to discredit John or ride the wave of his popularity. Only Luke identified the other groups of people. They were surprisingly receptive to John's message. Another example that throughout his gospel, Luke makes clear all are welcome in the Lord's kingdom. Tax collectors were often Israelites working for the Roman government and almost universally despised. As a result, they lived at the edge of society. The fact they were there, indicates some were searching for change in their lives. Think of the difference they made every day at their tax stations only collecting what was legal. Soldiers were probably

there to keep an eye on the crowd. Their reputation was as bullies. Obviously not all were, and some were ready to reconsider their past actions. Imagine the surprise when they didn't intimidate people, but rather treated them with respect. Of the people who heard John's message, these were stirred to ask John what to do.

Concl. In answer to the question John didn't tell people to quit their jobs. There was another choice: do your job, fairly, with integrity and respect for others. [*Living Liturgy, 2022*, Liturgical Press, 2021, p. 14] It is good news that we don't have to quit our jobs to follow the Lord. We can follow him while living in the world, amid the religious, political and history of our culture today. It is certainly not easy. The question is not, what shoulda, woulda, coulda we do? It is what *can* we do? John's answer is

deceptively simple even for today. We can do plenty and it's not difficult. We can prepare ourselves for the Lord's coming by sharing what we have with those who have none; by not cheating others; by not intimidating others with power or authority; by treating everyone with respect, especially those with whom we disagree. **Imagine what we could do every day. Wouldn't that change some of the religious, political, historical and equality issues we are currently struggling with! We can reflect on the answer to, "What should I do?" and then do something.**

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December 12, 2021