

Text: [Mark 1:1-8 \(CEB\)](#)

Date: December 7, 2025

Title: “Room in Your Heart” – Sanctuary Advent Series, wk 2

Theme: Making room in our hearts is about admitting what seems off in our lives.

1

Kate and I at that stage of being married and living together in the same house for long enough to where our closets have become completely unmanageable
You know what I mean? Just completely full of stuff

The bathroom closet is totally overwhelmed with every over-the-counter medication for every illness we’ve experienced these past few years

About 8 mostly-used boxes of band-aids that only have the weird sizes left – the round ones, the super tiny ones, and the super giant ones

There are way too many sets of sheets: sheets that we just bought,
sheets that probably are at the age where they should be thrown out,
sheets we hated but kept anyway, because, well, sheets are expensive

The closet in our den is full of just about every imaginable thing from dog food to hand weights to guitar cases to cleaning supplies to clergy robes & stoles

It’s clear that some of these spaces are way overdue for a purge
Because it’s getting to the point where every closet I open is beginning to stress me out

And I know it stresses Kate out too, because she’s mentioned it now about three times

That’s kind of the magic number before work begins

2

It's not that the things in the closets aren't useful – they (mostly)
are
It just that we live in the age of stuff, and there's so much of it to
manage

Our lives feel crowded
Like sometimes, we just need a purge
A trip to Goodwill, a trip to the dumpster
A restart, a reset, a recalibration

How would you describe the state of YOUR closets?

I'll invite you to think about that
As today we're talking about what it means to make room in our
hearts for Jesus

3

I'm certain that we don't give John the Baptist enough credit
Sure, we allow him to take over this first Sunday in December
every year
But that's usually about the only time we think of him

And yet – he was attracting large crowds to come and see him IN
THE DESERT

This guy was not preaching at a synagogue in a city, where
people were
He was out in the wilderness – probably about a day's journey (on
foot) from Jerusalem
And he was attracting crowds not just of thousands, but likely tens
of thousands

They came to hear a message about repentance
About changing their hearts and lives
About turning away from sin and turning toward God with
everything that they had

There was zero flattery mixed in
Zero appeal to anyone's vanity
Just a difficult message in a desolate setting
It was essentially – people, clean your closets – NOW!

And yet, so many people WANTED to hear this – so many people
NEEDED to hear this
That they came from all over to see John in the desert
They lined up to confess their sins and be baptized

Now, I've been using the idea of closet cleaning to talk about the
kind of purge that we all know that we MUST do
But don't really want to do

I know it's not what we maybe expect, or what we want
In this Christmas season
Known for being the most overhyped, over-the-top time of the
year
Where we always seem to come down on the side of "more is
better"
It's hard to let anything go
And yet, I can't get away from the fact that every time I open my
closet, I feel overwhelmed and just a little bit anxious

4

I'm not sure what people might have said if you had interviewed
them about why they made the journey to see John
It's clear that he was a cultural phenomenon

His message and his personality made a huge impression – even decades later, early Christians found that people still talked about “the baptism of John”

They didn’t know about being baptized in Jesus’ name, but they knew about the baptism of John (Acts 18:32)

And like I said in my email on Friday, even people he preached against – like King Herod – WANTED to listen to him

What was that about?

Was it just about witnessing a cultural moment – the way that we might want to share a viral meme or video with our friends?

Or did it go deeper?

Would those folks who came out to the Jordan have said, “I just had things I couldn’t ignore anymore”?

“I needed to let them go”

John’s baptism was about letting go

It was about handing over something that wasn’t working anymore

So that God could do something new

That’s what it means to make room for Christ in this season

What is it in our lives that’s causing us pain?

That’s causing us regret?

That’s causing us worry and fear?

What’s keeping us from feeling like whole people?

Maybe a relationship’s not working like you need it to

And you need God’s wisdom on what to do about that

Maybe you are caught up in an addiction

You haven’t been willing to admit that before

But you feel like maybe this is the moment to get help

Maybe you're just angry
Over the state of the world
Or over the state of YOUR world
And you need God to help you make room for grace

5

At some point, Kate and I are going to have to tackle these
closets, whether we want to or not
And it's like that in our spiritual lives too

The early church knew that
That's why Advent originally was every bit as solemn and
penitential as the season of Lent

But our temptation is always just to keep going,
To pretend that even though we feel this disquiet inside
That everything's ok

I know though that if I do nothing,
someday I'm going to open that closet and all the stuff is just
going to fall on me like an avalanche

Making room for God during this season essentially amounts to
this:

Admitting that we need something in our lives to be different than
it is right now

I believe that's why people trekked days into the desert to see
John

Preparing the way means admitting that we need God to DO
something in us
And making room means letting go of the things that get in the
way
So that we can create space for what God is going to do next

It's no more complicated than this:
When your hands are full, it's hard to receive the thing God wants
to give you
That's why we need to make room

So...this Advent, are you ready to clean out your closets?
Amen.

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