

# Short Talk

(SHT180)

## Turn back to God!

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ALL AGE WORSHIP  
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## SHORT TALK: “Turn back to God!”

- Aim of Short talk:** To encourage people, as they wait for Christmas to turn back to God.
- Use of Short talk:** This is a short All Age talk picking out one issue from the Lectionary Gospel reading of the Sunday main service. The talk stands alone and assumes that the Gospel Bible reading may not yet have been read to the congregation. It could be used for example, for the whole congregation before the children go out to their age specific groups, leaving the adults with a full sermon later.
- Main themes:** John the Baptist, Advent, Jesus, Repentance
- Biblical references:** Matthew 3:1-12
- Lectionary:** Year A – The 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent
- Props:** You will need to set up the front of the church in the following way:
- A few (plastic) chairs lying around in an untidy way; some lying on their side
  - A newspaper scattered all over the floor
  - 3 mugs and 3 small plates scattered over the floor
  - A table set up on which is placed a washing up bowl with water in it, a tea-towel and a couple of dusters
  - A recycling box (to one side)

I want you to imagine that your rich uncle is going to Australia for a few years, and he has invited you and your family to come and live in his home while he is away.

Now your uncle’s home is rather a splendid place with ten bedrooms and six bathrooms.

- Not only that, but the house also has an underground swimming pool, a gym, a games room and even a home cinema.

Your uncle says that if you would like to come and live in his home, then the only thing that you must do is keep it clean and tidy;

- ready for when he returns.

So, you all move into your uncle’s home and you enjoy living there for ten years until one day when you get a phone call from a friend of your uncle’s.

- They tell you that your uncle is on a flight back home and will be back in a day!
- Imagine for a moment that this (*Point to the mess at the front of the church*) is the mess in your uncle’s lounge.

What are you going to do about it? *(Receive responses)*

- I think that we had better get things sorted out, don't you?
- I need some helpers please. *(Receive 6 volunteers)*

*(To volunteer 1)* Please could you put the chairs the right way up.

- *(To volunteer 2)* Please could you clear away the rubbish into my recycling box.
- *(To volunteer 3)* Please could you pick up the mugs and plates.
- *(To volunteer 4)* Please could you wash up the dirty mugs and plates.
- *(To volunteer 5)* Please could you dry up the washed mugs and plates.
- *(To volunteer 6)* Please could you dust around.

*(While the volunteers are clearing up, carry on talking)*

You would have been very relieved to have had a warning that your uncle was coming back home soon, wouldn't you?

- Imagine what he would have said if he had come back home and found this mess!

Receiving the warning gave you a chance to act didn't it?

- You were able to clear away the rubbish.
- You were able to clean and put things back to rights, ready for your uncle.

A few months before Jesus began His ministry, a man called John the Baptist was sent by God to prepare the people to receive Jesus.

- People flocked out to the wilderness, where he was living to hear what John had to say and this was John's message:
- *"Turn back to God! The kingdom of heaven will soon be here."* (Matthew 3:2 CEV)

John the Baptist was basically warning people that Jesus, God's King was on His way.

- They needed to prepare for His arrival by turning back to God.

Turning back to God meant **recognising** that there was rubbish and dirt in their lives;

- not rubbish like old newspapers or crisp packets,
- or dirt like dust or that on unwashed mugs and plates,
- but the rubbish and dirt of being self-centred, of hating, of stealing, of being jealous and so on.

Turning back to God also meant **getting rid** of that rubbish and dirt, and getting cleaned up inside;

- in other words, stopping doing the wrong things and **choosing** to live the right way;
- loving God and loving other people.

Many people listened to John's warning and were baptised in the River Jordan as a sign that they were turning back to God to live life differently.

- These people were then ready to meet Jesus when He came.

During this season of Advent, you and I are waiting to celebrate Jesus' birth on Christmas Day.

- But we are also waiting for the wonderful day when Jesus will return as King.
- We, like the people of Israel back then, need to take notice of John the Baptist's warning to turn back to God.

The way that we turn back to God is by **recognising** that there is rubbish and dirt in our lives too;

- the rubbish and dirt of being self-centred, hating, being disobedient, stealing, being jealous, gossiping, judging, unforgiveness and so on.

Having recognised the dirt and the rubbish, we can **turn to Jesus**, asking Him to forgive us and to help us stop doing the things that make us dirty inside.

Turning back to God also means that we **choose** to live in the right way,

- loving God and loving other people.

Let's listen to John the Baptist's warning and act so that we are ready when Jesus returns.