

Did you read the headlines in the news today? I wish I didn't; they leave me with a sick feeling inside. To put it into ABC's - abuse, bloodshed, corruption - a world gone wrong. Our lesson today comes from a time with the same ABC's - abuse, bloodshed, corruption. Reading the history left me with another sick feeling inside. At the time of our lesson Tiberius Caesar, the Roman emperor, was a disgusting, bloody, miserable man, and when he died his people cheered in the streets. Pontius Pilate, ruler in Jerusalem, was a cruel, murderous man kicked out of office for his cruel and bloody ways. Herod stole and married his brother's wife and later had John the Baptist killed and his head served up on a platter. And Annas and Caiaphas? At the time of the Romans, the way to the priesthood was money and politics and now and then a bloody knife. It was a time when almost everybody in power was corrupt. And the people under them were either crushed or corrupted or both. It was a world gone wrong.

In his world gone wrong, God sent John to put a stop to the wrong and start making things right. And where did God have John point his finger, God's finger of judgment? Not just at them. Not just at them in power. Not just at them in the money. Not just at them that the world would call evil. God had John point His finger at you and me. God's way to change this world gone wrong isn't just to change them; it is to change us, to call us on our sin no matter how small or normal or acceptable we think our sin is.

And that right there might be one of our easiest and worst sins. In a world gone wrong, it is so easy to think our sin small, normal, acceptable ... and that they and them ... they need to be stopped in their sin; they are the ones who need to change. Well, God gave his

Word to John to preach repentance, to preach a change of mind about all sin. Our sin isn't small, normal, acceptable. Our sin, every sin must be rejected. Every mountain and molehill that gets in the way of Jesus ... every valley, every hole, every rut that gets in the way of Jesus must be made level. Every crooked way must be made straight.

The Lord is coming and who can dare to meet him? Only he who has clean hands and a pure heart. Not those with cleaner hands and hearts, who aren't as dirty as someone else. But only those with clean hands and a pure heart. You heard Malachi - **“Who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap [not a gentle soap, but a harsh, caustic, burning soap] ... He will purify ... and refine.”** We don't want that kind of cleaning. And God takes no pleasure in giving that kind of cleaning.

That's why when God gave John his Word of repentance, God also gave John his Word of baptism and forgiveness. In this world gone wrong, for hearts dirty and foul, God offers a washing that heals instead of burns. A washing of water and the Word ... a washing of forgiveness made possible in the blood of Jesus. Blood doesn't seem like much of a cleaner so how does that work? God took our sin and put it on Jesus; he attached your guilt to Jesus. Then at the cross God cursed Jesus as the sinner of our sins. He made Jesus pay. That payment, Jesus' life and death, his body and blood, satisfied and neutralized God's curse; it neutralized, canceled sin's attachment to Jesus and canceled sin's attachment to us. Jesus' death paid for our sin. His blood washed it away. Freed from our sin, God saw Jesus as sinless, clean, and right ... and raised him back to life. And you, in Jesus ... God sees you the same way - sinless, clean, and right in the blood of Christ. It's hard to see blood as a detergent, so Jesus gives us a washing that is easier for us to see - a washing with water and the

Word - in the washing of baptism “your sins are washed away ... you are forgiven!”

So now what? Let’s look at our lesson. **“The crowd asked - “What should we do then?” John answered: “The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same.” And when tax collectors asked: “What should we do?” John told them: “Don’t collect any more than you are required to.” And when soldiers asked “what should we do?” He answered: “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely - be content with your pay.”** In that world gone wrong, when God’s people asked “so now what?” what was John’s answer? It wasn’t “Go change the world ... go fix their wrong.” God’s answer was “Start with yourself - fix your wrong.” And not just fix your wrong-doing, fix your wrong-thinking. Think and live like you have God taking care of you. Think and give like you have God giving to you. In this world gone wrong, God’s way to change this world for the better is for us to be changed ... for us to bring his love into our world.

I’ve seen you do that with your gifts to our Share the Burden Fund and our Christmas gifts for Hillcrest. I’ve heard how you share the peace and hope of Jesus at work.

But I’ve also seen how we can be willing to fit right in with the world - answering their wrong with our wrong, answering their anger with our own anger. I’ve seen how we can be willing to fit in with the world with our priorities - making the world’s priorities our priorities, playing with the world before we work with Christ, spending with the world before we give with Christ. I’ve seen how we can be willing to fit in with the world - belittling the Truth of Christ - “a little false teaching is OK if it helps us fit in the neighbors better, if it gets us

what we want.” We might think it small, normal, acceptable. I challenge you to find any of that thinking acceptable in His Word. Christ has his ax at the root of that tree to bring it down.

And he will have his way. Against a world gone wrong, he will have his way with judgment. And for his people who cry, “Lord, have mercy,” he will have his way with mercy. He will have every valley filled in; he will have every mountain made low. He will have the crooked made straight, and the rough made smooth. He will make it so.

How? In this world gone wrong, he’s given us his word to start with us. So prepare the way for the Lord in you! Let Jesus have his way in you and you will be part of how Jesus sets this world gone wrong right. Amen.

THE SERVICE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we see the peoples and powers of this world fighting to “have their way.” In that fight, what do we see? Again and again, we will see evil at work, and hearts and lives breaking and broken. Some days it might seem that the only one getting his way is the devil.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we are pointed to the Coming One who will get his way - and his way will be peace and life made right!

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

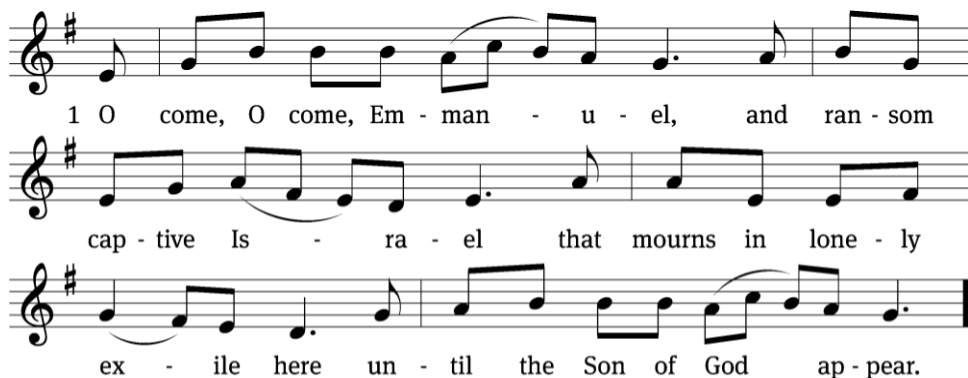
C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION OF SINS AND LIGHTING RITE

M: When God created the world, he made the crown of his creation - the human race - in his image (Genesis 1:26). Perfect people lived in a perfect world in a perfect relationship with God.

C: **But mankind rebelled against God, bringing sin into the world and death to all. God declared the wages of sin to be death (Romans 6:23). We too are guilty, and we confess our sinful thoughts, words, and actions.**

M: However, God - who is Love - did not want to be separated from his children forever. He promised a Savior who would bear the punishment for sin, defeat the devil, and break the bonds of death.



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som
cap - tive Is - ra - el that mourns in lone - ly
ex - ile here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.

Refrain



Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el
shall come to you, O Is - ra - el!

- M: When the time had fully come, God sent his Son. Jesus, our Savior, has paid the ransom for your debt; your sins are forgiven (Galatians 4:4,5). In view of God's mercy, today we light the peace candle. Jesus tells us, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).
- C: **Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).**



O, come, our Peace, who auth - ors faith, Per - fect our trust in
you by grace. As - sure us by your gen - tle Word
That in true faith we all en - dure. Re - joice! Re - joice!
Em - man - u - el Shall come to you, O Is - ra - el!

- M: In the peace of God we go to the world - to our friends, relatives, acquaintances and neighbors. We regard no one from a worldly point of view. If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5: 16-18).

C: Yes, God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. Jesus, who had no sin, became sin for us; in him we have become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

Refrain

Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el
shall come to you, O Is - ra - el!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for your only Son. By his coming, give us strength in our conflicts, and shed light on our path through the darkness of this world; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Malachi 3:1-7b

"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.

"So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me," says the LORD Almighty.

“I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them.

Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 130A

Refrain

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD,
Lord, hear my voice.

Tone

Out / of the depths

I / cry to you, O LORD;

Lord, / hear my voice.

Listen closely as I / call on you for help.

LORD, if you kept / track of sins,

O / Lord, then who could stand?

But with you there is for- / givenness,

in order / that you may be feared. *Refrain*

I wait for the LORD, my / soul waits,
and in his / word I put my hope.
More than watchers wait for / morning
my / soul waits for the Lord.

Israel, put your hope / in the LORD,
for with the / LORD is faithful love;
with him is complete re- / demption.
He will redeem Israel from the / guilt of all their sins.

**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
and to the / Holy Spirit,
as it was in the be- / ginning,
is now, and will be for- / ever. Amen. Refrain**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. And all people will see God's salvation. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Luke 3:1-18

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar — when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene — during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘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 people will see God's salvation.' "

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

"What should we do then?" the crowd asked.

John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely — be content with your pay."

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

"On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"

Hymn 316

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord is nigh;
come, then, and listen, for he brings good news about the King of kings.

Then cleansed be ev'ry life from sin and furnished for a Guest within,
and let us all our hearts prepare for Christ to come and enter there.

We hail you as our Savior, Lord, our refuge and our great reward;
without your grace we waste away like flow'rs that wither and decay.

Stretch forth your hand, our health restore, and lift us up to fall no more;
O make your face on us to shine, and fill the world with love divine.

All praise to you, eternal Son, whose advent has our freedom won,
whom with the Father we adore and Holy Spirit evermore.

SERMON

Luke 3:1-18

HYMN

“Dawning Light of Our Salvation”

Hymn 311

Violinist – Meredith Fein

Long in darkness Israel wandered; long in mortal shadows we
walked in bondage and self-pity, trod in paths of sin and grief.
In the prophets’ words he told us, long the God of Israel spoke;
he alone in strength would save us from the hands of all our foes.

Refrain

Ev’ry valley be exalted! Ev’ry mountain be made plane!
Crooked ways repent and straighten; all creation bend in praise!

He shall raise a mighty Savior; born of David’s lineage, he
comes in cov’nant love to claim us, from our sins to set us free.
Light to those who dwell in darkness, life to those from death who flee,
joy unto the earth, and gladness, to your pathways dawning peace! *Refrain*

Jesus, Lord, and mighty Savior, David’s son and yet his King,
dawning light of our salvation, of your saving pow’r we sing!
Stand, O lame, and dance, ye broken; know the Savior’s healing grace.
Come, O deaf, and hear him singing; turn, O blind, behold his face! *Refrain*

OFFERING

If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an “I Give Online” card in the pew racks.



PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Gracious Lord, you sent your Son into our world to destroy the power of Satan and to restore our human race as your children and heirs. Work in us during this Advent season so that we may rejoice in the coming of our Savior and long for his coming again.

Make us eager to receive the King who comes to save us.

Use the preaching of your holy law to rid us of all delusions that sin is acceptable or that we can gain your love by what we do. Move us to realize how detestable our sin is to feel sorrow for what we have done wrong.

Lead us to be honest about our sin and our need for a Savior.

Lift up our hearts to see the King who comes to save. Lead us to marvel at his willingness to take on our human form and stand in our place. Show us the power he extends in his Word and sacraments to make us your children and keep us in faith. Thrill us with his promise to come and take us to our eternal home to live with you forever.

Open our eyes to see and believe the wonders of our Savior's love.

As we live with Christ and trust in him, move us to exercise the strength of his Holy Spirit so we turn from sin and all temptation. When we fall, forgive us and renew us to love and serve you and all people.

Empower us and guide us to walk with Christ by faith.

Protect us from the distractions that come at this time of the year. Even as we celebrate Christmas as a holiday, keep our hearts focused on your holy day gift of Jesus.

Give us joy, not only in Christ's coming at Christmas, but his coming in the gospel, and his coming on the last day.

Move us to share with others the most important gift of this season, the truth about Jesus. Lead us to pray for those whose joy is diminished because of sickness, pain, or loss.

[Especially bless... here name the person and the cause of the petition.] Even in our busy times, give us opportunities and the heart to help those in need.

May others see the love of Christ in our words and actions.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

Lord, shine through the distractions of this season so that our joy and faith also shine through - for your glory and the good of your people!

Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Blessed Lord, you have given us your Holy Scriptures for our learning. May we so hear them, read, learn, and take them to heart that, being strengthened and comforted by your holy Word, we may cling to the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

“There’s a Voice in the Wilderness Crying”

Hymn 308

There’s a voice in the wilderness crying, a call from the ways untrod:
Prepare in the desert a highway, a highway for our God!
The valleys shall be exalted, the lofty hills brought low;
make straight all the crooked places where the Lord our God may go!

O Christians, you bring good tidings; get up to the heights and sing!
Proclaim to a desolate people the coming of their King.
Like the flow’rs of the field they perish; like grass their works decay.
The pow’r and pomp of nations shall pass like a dream away.

But the Word of our God is eternal; the arm of the Lord is strong.
He stands in the midst of the nations, and he shall right the wrong.
He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, the lambs shall gently hold,
to pastures of peace shall lead them, and bring them safe to his fold.

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Join Us This Holiday Season!

Women's Christmas Party

Sunday, December 8 – 2 pm

Piano Recital

Tuesday, December 10 – 6:30 pm

Advent Wednesdays

December 11 & 18

3:30 and 6:30 pm

Advent Dinners at 4:30 pm

Christmas HouseWalk

Saturday, December 14 – 4 pm

Children's Christmas Service

Sunday, December 15 – 3 pm

All German Christmas Song Service and Fellowship Meal

Sunday, December 22 – 4:30 pm

Christ the King Lutheran Church

100 W. Michigan Ave, Palatine, IL

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service - 5 pm

Christmas Day Festival Service - 9 am

New Year's Eve Service/Lord's Supper - 5 pm

Join us for our annual Game Night after the service!