

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Second Sunday of Advent - Year C

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Malachi 3:1-4

Luke 1:68-79

Philippians 1:3-11

Luke 3:1-6

12/09/2018

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke:

1In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, 2during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,

make his paths straight.

5Every valley shall be filled,

and every mountain and hill shall be made low,

and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

The Gospel of our Lord

Prayer

Let us pray,

Amen

Expectation

Good morning! Do you feel it? That little bit of electricity that’s in the air during the season of Advent? There is a sense of expectation as we await the birth of our savior, which is a little strange. The season of Advent is supposed to be characterized by things like joy and peace. But that expectation can often leave us feeling anxious and nervous. Now when you combine those emotions with the stress that the secular world places on us during this time, we feel a little crazy.

When I was growing up my pastor did this interesting little thing during the prayers of intercession for the season of Advent. (He might be still doing it.) He would add a shopping day countdown into the prayers. For instance, today he would have written something like “16 shopping days left, and for this we lament.” His whole point was that in a time of the year when we’re supposed to be enjoying time with family and friends working to find the joy that Christ

brings into our lives, we often end up burdened by the materialistic demands that society has put upon us.

In today's scripture we focus on John the Baptist. In the Gospel reading we hear of his mission to call Israel to repentance, but where we usually hear a song, we had another piece from the Gospel of Luke. The Psalms were basically the hymnals for the Jews, and so it makes sense to add this song from Luke. We hear what is called the "*Benedictus*." The church is pretty bad at coming up with names for things so they keep it simple, they name it after the first word of whatever is written. So this song begins with the word "blessed", and that's what they called it. It's a song of joy as John the Baptists' father expresses the hope of a whole nation with the words we have before us.

But it's so easy to forget how beautiful scripture is, especially around this time of year. So I'm going to read parts of the lessons for you again, and I want you to listen, to truly listen to what God is saying to us right now! Sit back, close your eyes if you need to, and listen. I'll go through them again slowly, and let scripture roll over you.

From the Gospel of Luke we hear:

"He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,

make his paths straight.

5Every valley shall be filled,

*and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ ”¹*

And Zechariah sang:

*“68Blessed are you, Lord, the | God of Israel,
you have come to your people and | set them free.*

*69You have raised up for us a | mighty Savior,
born of the house of your | servant David.*

*70Through your holy prophets, you promised of old to save us | from our enemies,
71from the hands of | all who hate us,
72to show mercy | to our forebears,
and to remember your | holy covenant.*

73This was the oath you swore to our | father Abraham:

*74to set us free from the hands of our | enemies,
free to worship you | without fear,
75holy and righteous before you, all the days | of our life.*

*76And you, child, shall be called the prophet of | the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to pre- | pare the way,*

77to give God’s people knowledge | of salvation

¹Luke 3:3-6 NRSV

by the forgiveness | of their sins.

78 In the tender compassion | of our God

the dawn from on high shall | break upon us,

79 to shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shad- | ow of death,

and to guide our feet into the | way of peace.”²

And finally, from St. Paul:

“9 And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight 10 to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, 11 having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.”³

May these words bring you peace in a season that can so often feel so rushed and busy. Amen.

² Luke 1:68-79 NRSV

³ Philippians 1:9-11 NRSV