

*“...as 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.’”*

*Luke 3:4*

**St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church  
2nd Sunday of Advent – December 8, 2024**

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Rev. Katie McNeal, Presiding Minister

Maizy Fisher, Director of Music Ministries

*We are delighted to have you worship with us this morning!  
Know that you are welcome here just as you are.*

*If you are looking for a church to call home, why not consider making this one your own? If this is your first time worshipping at St. John, please fill out the visitor information card stapled to your bulletin.*

*Everything you need to follow worship can be found in this bulletin. As you are comfortable, please rise when there is an \* and join in the congregational responses, noted in **bold**. All songs are marked with numbers. The red book in the pew has all the songs. Look for the large number in the upper corner of the page to find the correct song.*

*During the time of **Peace**, you are invited to turn to those around you and offer a word of peace. We suggest a handshake and saying, "Peace be with you." You are also welcomed to offer another gesture of peace (wave, fist-bump, smile, etc.). Hand sanitizer is available in each pew.*

*At the time of **Offering**, you are invited to share a gift. Envelopes are available in the pews if you prefer. Online gifts may be made using the QR code below:*



*You may also offer updates to our ongoing prayer list using the yellow cards in the pews and placing them in the offering plates. **Visitor information cards** and member attendance cards (attached to the front of the bulletin) may also be placed in the offering plates.*

*As Lutherans, we believe Christ is truly present in the elements of the Lord's Supper. At the time of **Holy Communion**, all baptized individuals are welcome to come forward via the center aisle, receive the elements, and return via the side aisles. We begin at the front of the right side, commune all on the right side, then we will invite the left side forward. When you come forward, you may receive the bread from the pastor (gluten free wafers are available), then pre-filled cups with wine or grape juice from the assisting minister. You may consume the elements after receiving them then place the empty cup in the tray held by the acolyte. Those who do not receive Holy Communion are welcome to come forward for a blessing.*

*If you need a **restroom**, restrooms are located on the bottom floor at the far side of the building from the elevator. Restrooms may be accessed either via the stairs in the rear of the sanctuary, the stairs by the Greeting Area, or the elevator.*

*A **playroom** is available downstairs for children who need a break from the worship service. This room is by the elevator on the lower level. An adult must remain with the child. Children are also welcome to utilize the books and puzzles available in the Greeting Area on the top level by the elevator.*

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to fill out the blue prayer request forms located in each pew. The cards will be collected during our hymn of the day, and prayers will be offered during the prayers of intercession.

## PRELUDE

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

## GATHERING

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

### \*GATHERING SONG *Prepare the Royal Highway* (ELW 264)



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!  
2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!  
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!  
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!  
Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!  
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.  
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:  
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!  
All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:  
So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:



Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

## **\*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Greetings to you in the name of the triune God, the one whose word always accomplishes:  
The Shaper of Life, the Savior of Humanity, the Spirit of Renewal.

**Amen.**

Today, as we confess our sins, we recognize how easily we overlook the gifts God gives.  
And we accept the sad truth that our limitations often create the conditions for sin. Let us  
confess our sins in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Merciful God,

**we want a faith that feels like more than words,**

**but we lack your power to embody goodness.**

**We hear your call to serve others yet feel too worn out to make the food.**

**We hunger to taste justice but fear the burning spice of the meal.**

**We want our place at your table but resist sitting beside a stranger.**

**We have lost our appetites for mere thoughts and prayers,**

**but we fail to match our intentions to our actions.**

**Forgive us and restore us with the healing wholeness of your presence.**

God knows we are imperfect.

But God did not invite us here today for what we have done  
or how we have behaved. God loves you.

God always cared much more for you than for your shortcomings.

God forgives you all your sins.

Now repeat after me.

We accept God's forgiveness.

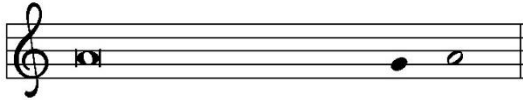
**We accept God's forgiveness.**

We take our place in God's purpose.

**We take our place in God's purpose.**

**Amen.**

**\*KYRIE**



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from a-bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



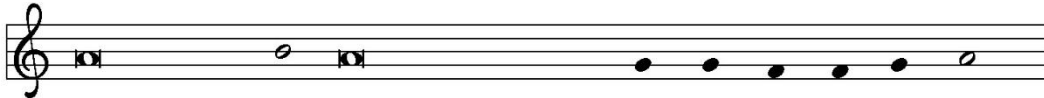
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor-ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. Lord have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra-cious Lord. A - men.

**\*CANTICLE OF PRAISE *This Is the Feast***

*Refrain*

Assisting minister



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia.

All



1 Wor-thy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us



free to be peo-ple of God. Pow - er and rich - es and wis - dom and



strength, and hon - or and bless-ing and glo - ry are his.

*Refrain*



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia.



2 Sing with all the peo - ple of God and join in the



hymn of all cre - a - tion: Bless-ing and hon - or and glo - ry and



might be to God and the Lamb for - ev - er. A - men.

*Final refrain*



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God, for the Lamb who was slain



has be - gun his reign. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

## LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Each of our Advent candles  
represents God's generous goodness,  
the advent of Jesus, God's greatest gift,  
the Spirit's fluttering flicker of joy.



As we light each candle,  
we recognize the gifts  
God has given us this week.

Together, we pray:  
God, we reach for unreasonable hope;  
**and you prepare an incomparable future.**

God, we breathe in your peaceful refuge,  
**for you have made a place where we can safely rest.**

*The first and second candles are lit during the singing of the hymn.*

### ADVENT SONG *Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah* (ELW 240)



1 Light one can-dle to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.  
2 Light two can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.



He shall bring sal - va - tion to Is - ra - el, God ful - fills the prom - ise.  
He shall feed the flock like a shep-herd, gent - ly lead them home-ward.

God, we feel threatened by painful truths,  
but you build the path to peace through the wilderness.  
Speak boldly to us today so we can construct true peace  
upon the foundation of your care.

**Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming give to all the people of the world knowledge of your salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

## THE MAGNIFICAT (Luke 1:46-55)

*All*

1., 3. My soul pro-claims your great-ness, O God, and my  
2. You have cast the might - y down from their thrones, and up -

spir - it re - joic - es in you. You have looked with love on your  
lift - ed the hum-ble of heart. You have filled the hun - gry with

ser - vant here, and blessed me all my life through.  
won - drous things, and left the wealth - y no part.

Great and might - y are you, O Ho - ly One,  
Great and might - y are you, O Faith - ful One,

strong is your kind - ness ev - er - more. How you fa - vor the  
strong is your jus - tice, strong your love, as you prom - ised to

*D.C.*  
weak and low - ly one, hum - bling the proud of heart!  
Sar - ah and A - bra - ham, kind - ness for - ev - er - more.

## PRAYER FOR OUTREACH MINISTRY



## FIRST READING: Malachi 3:1-4

A reading from Malachi.

<sup>1</sup> See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>2</sup> But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; <sup>3</sup> he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. <sup>4</sup> Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## \*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

## \*GOSPEL READING: Luke 3:1-6

The holy gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup> In 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, <sup>2</sup> during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, <sup>4</sup> as 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.

<sup>5</sup> Every 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;

<sup>6</sup> and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ**

# CHILDREN'S SERMON

## SERMON

### \*HYMN OF THE DAY *Christ, Be Our Light* (ELW 715)

(Blue prayer cards are collected)



1 Long - ing for light, we wait in dark - ness. Long - ing for  
2 Long - ing for peace, our world is trou - bled. Long - ing for  
3 Long - ing for food, man - y are hun - gry. Long - ing for  
4 Long - ing for shel - ter, man - y are home - less. Long - ing for  
5 Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the



truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,  
hope, man - y de - spair. Your word a - lone  
wa - ter, man - y still thirst. Make us your bread,  
warmth, man - y are cold. Make us your build - ing,  
hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants



your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.  
has pow'r to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.  
bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.  
shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.  
to one an - oth - er, signs of your king - dom come.



*Refrain*  
Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the



dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your



church gath - ered to - day.

## **\*NICENE CREED**

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven**

**and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.**

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**



## **\*PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence. *A brief silence*

Refining God, move through your church. Root out practices that harm your people, and kindle a fire for sharing the gospel among bishops, pastors, deacons, and all the baptized. Lord, in your mercy,

**receive our prayer.**

Renewing God, transform your creation. Steer us from habits that harm what you have made, and guide us in practices that preserve and restore creatures and habitats. Lord, in your mercy,

**receive our prayer.**

Ruling God, teach the nations your ways. Strengthen organizations and communities that broker peace and care for refugees, immigrants, and all caught in the center of conflict. Lord, in your mercy,

**receive our prayer.**

Rescuing God, restore your people who are in any need. Heal all who are suffering especially Bob, Geneva, Cherry, Winnie, Henry, Harry, Ellen, Ruth, Sally, Katie, Debi, Anne, Karen, Nan, Beverly, those on our prayer list, all whom we remember aloud or in our hearts and all who suffer in any way with the oil of healing and grant them renewal. Provide comfort and strength, and nurture sustained wholeness for the future. Lord, in your mercy,

**receive our prayer.**

Reforming God, fill this congregation with your presence. Enrich our seasonal preparations, and bless the efforts by worship committees, music ensembles, staff, clergy, and lay leaders as they work in the weeks ahead. Lord, in your mercy,

**receive our prayer.**

Reassuring God, we remember those who have died and rest in you. Guide us in deep gratitude for their life, and allow us to learn from their faithful witness. Lord, in your mercy,

**receive our prayer.**

Revitalizing God, you are always with us. Restore us with your everlasting mercy, and receive the prayers gathered before you now with the prayers on the hearts of this congregation today (*blue prayer cards are read*). Into your precious keeping we entrust our prayer.

**Amen.**

## **\*PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

Let us share Christ's peace with one another.

## MEAL

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

### OFFERING

#### OFFERTORY HYMN *We Are Waiting for Jesus* (ACS 905)

*(sing twice) Rise on 4<sup>th</sup> verse (Verse 2, second time through)*



1 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.  
2 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.



We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.  
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.



Sun of jus - tice, shine up - on us; we are trust - ing in your prom - ise.  
Lov - ing Shep - herd, walk be - side us; stir our hearts, and gent - ly guide us.



We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.  
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

### \*OFFERING PRAYER

Together we pray.

Holy Spirit, please bless these small gifts we give.

**You set the table with plenty of love.**

Prepare room in your home

**for my neighbor and me.**

Prepare a place in your vision

**for my neighbor and me.**

Prepare a seat at your table

**for my neighbor and me.**

Holy Spirit, you have blessed these gifts we give.

**You set the table with plenty of love.**

## \*GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

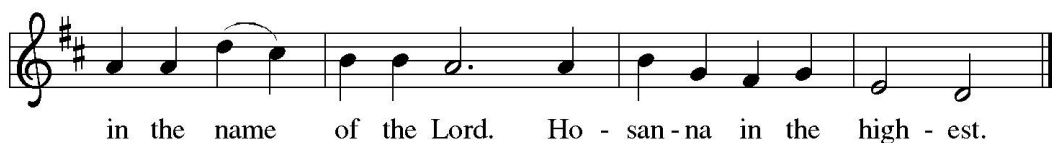
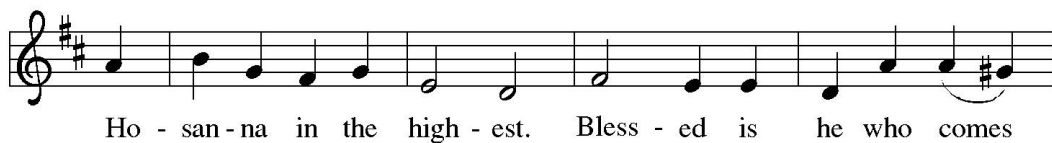
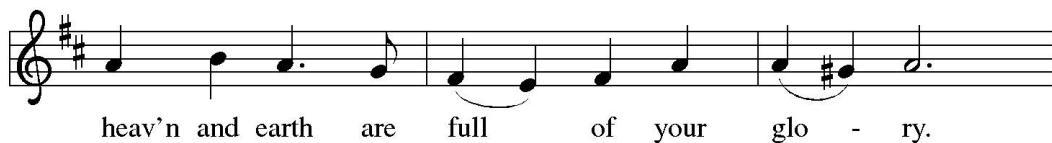
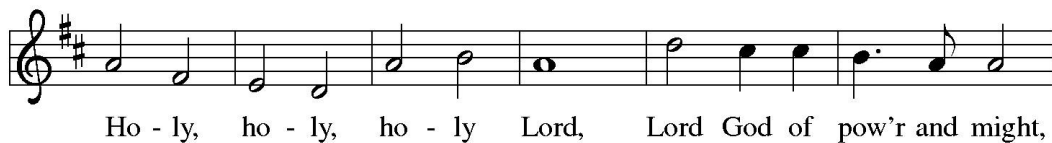
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
that we should at all times and in all places  
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,  
through our Savior Jesus Christ.

You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer,  
through whom you will also make all things new  
in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness.

And so, with all the choirs of angels,  
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



God, yours was the First Thought; before any human lived or knew your name, you whispered, and creation built itself around your words. Before your ancient people knew the depth of your love, you promised them goodness, and led them to freedom.

**Your love grows unseen.**

Before the world knew your face, your own child was born in a quiet stable.

**Your love blooms in the dark.**

Before we knew the depth of your love, your child died, crucified, and you forgave, and new life grew in the grave.

**Your love echoes in the silence.**

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, And gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, Saying: take and eat; this is my body given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

This is the body of Jesus, the blood of Jesus.

To you, O God, holy three-in-one, one-in-three, be all honor and glory in your holy church, now and forever. **Amen.**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray,

**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**

## \*INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Holy Spirit, you are here now in this food, where you embody forgiveness;  
and in these people, whom you have leavened with grace.

People of God, God's love grew unseen, but now you know it;  
God's love echoes in silence, but you have sung the song.

Now come taste the goodness of God's mercy and notice what God has done for you.

## DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

*Through this meal, we know forgiveness, life, and salvation as the blessings of God's sacramental grace. In response to Jesus' invitation, all baptized individuals are welcome to come forward and experience the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine. Those who do not receive the bread and wine are invited to come forward for a blessing.*

*Grape juice and gluten free wafers are available upon request. Communion may also be brought back to the pews for those who are unable to come forward.*

## COMMUNION SONG *Lamb of God*



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on



us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have



mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the



sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.



**COMMUNION HYMN *There's a Voice in the Wilderness* (ELW 255)**



1 There's a voice in the wil - der - ness cry - ing, a  
 2 O Je - ru - sa - lem, her - ald good tid - ings, as -  
 3 But the word of our Sav - ior is faith - ful, the



call from the ways un - trod: Pre - pare in the des - ert a  
 cend to the heights and sing! Pro - claim to a des - o - late  
 arm of our God is strong, who stands in the midst of the



high - way, a high - way for our God!  
 peo - ple the com - ing of their king.  
 na - tions and soon will right the wrong.



The val - leys shall be ex - alt - ed, the  
 Like flow'rs of the field we per - ish, like  
 Lord, feed your flock like a shep - herd, the



loft - y hills brought low; make straight all the crook - ed  
 grass our works de - cay; the pow'r and the pomp of  
 lambs so gent - ly hold; in pas - tures of peace now



plac - es where God, our God, may go!  
 na - tions shall pass like a dream a - way.  
 lead them, and bring them to your fold.

**COMMUNION HYMN *Wait for the Lord* (ELW 262)**



Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.



Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!

**\*POST-COMMUNION BLESSING**

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and preserve you in grace. **Amen.**

**\*POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Faithful God,  
you have spread before us a feast of rich food and drink  
in the body and blood of your Son.  
Now send us out to labor with you,  
in service to the world you have made,  
and among the people you have made your home,  
in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**\*BLESSING**

God our Creator, who made the starlit sky, blesses you.  
God our Redeemer, who arrives at just the right time, blesses you.  
God our Sustainer, who sparks hope for the hopeless blesses you.  
God the Three in One and One in Three blesses you.  
**God blesses you. Amen.**

**\*SENDING SONG *Hark, the Glad Sound!* (ELW 239)**



1 Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior  
 2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, in Sa - tan's  
 3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing  
 4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of peace, your wel - come



prom - ised long; let ev - 'ry heart pre -  
 bond - age held. The gates of brass be -  
 soul to cure, and with the trea - sures  
 shall pro - claim, and heav'n's e - ter - nal



pare a throne and ev - 'ry voice a song.  
 fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.  
 of his grace to en - rich the hum - ble poor.  
 arch - es ring with your be - lov - ed name.

**\*DISMISSAL**

People of God, you have already shared  
 the arrival of God's goodness.

You carry the blessing of God, God, the First Whisper,  
 Jesus, the Living Promise, Spirit, the Speaker of Hearts.

Now go into this world expecting God's justice  
 and nurturing God's peace. Christ is with you

**Thanks be to God.**

**POSTLUDE**

## **Assisting in worship today:**

**Assisting Minister: Denise H**

**Acolyte: Ava N**

**Ushers: Dave K**

**Greeters:**

**Offering: Anna K & Nathan K**

**Advent Wreath Leaders: Niklewicz Family**

**Attendance last week: 73 + 5 zoom**

## **Notes for the day's texts:**

Luke sets the preaching of John the Baptist clearly in the midst of the political and religious environment of his day. We are told the names of the emperor, governor, and other political rulers of the day. They are the ones who are supposed to care for the welfare of the citizens of their territories. Although John gave his message while he was in the wilderness, it was intended to have its impact where the ordinary and the powerful live out their daily lives. John is not satisfied with the way things are, and his words help prepare us for the coming of one who will turn the world upside down. John's words tell us to examine our own lives and the world around us. We should not be complacent in the face of injustice, but instead seek forgiveness and strive for lives that bear fruit according to God's vision for the world.

We all have the potential to "over-spiritualize" the Bible and our faith, so that they become disconnected from the real needs of the world around us. This potential can be even greater in the days around Christmas, as we may seek to justify over-spending on gifts, excessive eating and drinking, or simply desire to escape from the difficulties of ordinary life for a time. John provides a warning about ignoring the truth about our sinfulness and the brokenness in the world. But John also repeats the promise that God ultimately will not settle for the way things are in the world, and that God's salvation will be made known in the one who is to come: Jesus.

## **Today's Music**

*Prepare the Royal Highway.* Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772-1847; tr. Lutheran Book of Worship, Music: Swedish folk tune, 17th cent. Augsburg Fortress / Public Domain.

*Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah.* Text: Wayne L. Wold, b. 1954, Music: Yiddish folk tune. Augsburg Fortress /Public Domain.

*Christ, Be Our Light.* Text: Text: Bernadette Farrell, b. 1957, Music: Bernadette Farrell. OCP (Oregon Catholic Press).

*We Are Waiting for Jesus.* Text: John Helgen, b. 1957, Music: John Helgen. Augsburg Fortress.

*There's a Voice in the Wilderness.* Text: James Lewis Milligan, 1876-1961, alt., Music: Henry Hugh Bancroft, 1904-1988. Public Domain / Estate of Henry Hugh Bancroft.

*Wait for the Lord.* Music: Taizé Community, Music: Jacques Berthier, 1923-1994. GIA Publications, Inc..

*Hark, the Glad Sound!* Text: Phillip Doddridge, 1702-1751, Music: Thomas Haweis, 1734-1820. Public Domain.

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## **Next Week's Readings**

*Zephaniah 3:14-20 Rejoice, the Lord is in your midst*

*Isaiah 12:2-6 In your midst is the Holy One of Israel*

*Philippians 4:4-7 Rejoice, the Lord is near*

*Luke 3:7-18 One more powerful is coming, baptizing with fire*