

**PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**ADVENT 2 - RETURN TO THE PROMISE**  
Reverend John R. Hanson  
Sunday, December 5, 2021, 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.

PRELUDE

Julie Hanson

INTRODUCTION - *Forerunners and messengers advance the work for restoration in our lives and in our world. While the focus is on John the Baptizer and his message in the wilderness, Malachi's prophesy also heralds the coming Lord Jesus as forerunner of the Lord of hosts. In this proclamation, all the baptized are called to participate in sharing the gospel. In so doing, we prepare the way for the Lord, and we assist all flesh in capturing a vision of the "salvation of God."*

SPECIAL MUSIC    Psalm 100 Kids (8:00) and J Crew (10:30)

THEME AND VERSE (light Advent candles)

**We give thanks to the Lord for he has looked favorably upon us and has sent us his beloved son. He has raised up a mighty Savior for us from the house of his servant David. God shows the mercy promised to our ancestors and remembers his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our ancestors Abraham and Sarah, that we might serve him without fear. We are to proclaim the day of the Lord, following John the Baptist, preparing the way of the Lord.**

*'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.'"* (Luke 3:4b-6)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION    God is good.    **All the time.**

GOSPEL: Luke 3:1-6

*John travels throughout the region of the Jordan River calling people to repentance and baptizing them as a sign of their willingness to accept God's forgiveness and to live a new life. In doing this, John fulfils Isaiah's prophecy of the voice in the wilderness preparing the way for the Lord and challenging the spectrum of political and religious authority.*

<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.'"

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION      All the time.      **God is good!**

#### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

We gather together to worship

**in the name of the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Let us prepare for the Lord's coming by repenting of our sins.

**Lord, we know you want us to be pure and to commit our very best to you, but for now we want to keep you at arm's length. Of course we are prepared to hear the wonderful news. We are ready for Christmas and Jesus' birth. We know the coming baby is Lord and Savior. Still we don't act saved, nor serve under you, our Lord. Forgive us for the sins we recognize, save us from the sins we conceal.**

Our God is producing a harvest of righteousness. In the gift of his Son, salvation comes to God's people through the forgiveness of sins. Our sins are forgiven. We can live in salvation today with lives of right relationship with God.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit! Amen.**

#### HYMN

*"Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel"*

Green # 34

Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

***Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

Oh, come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Oh, come, Desire of nations bind all peoples in one heart and mind;  
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease, fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

CCLI Song # 31982 CCLI License # 1713417

#### SERVICE OF HOLY BAPTISM (10:30)

#### SHARING OF THE PEACE

#### CHILDREN'S SERMON "Practice patience..."

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

**Lord Jesus, many of us are waiting for you: The war-torn are waiting for peace, the hungry are waiting for bread. The refugees are waiting for a homeland, the sick are waiting for healers. Have we been forgotten? O Lord, grasp us by the hand, open our eyes, bring us out of the darkness, set us free. Come quickly, we pray. Amen.**

#### READING: Malachi 3:1-4

*The Lord announces a covenant with Israel. A messenger like Malachi, (his name means "my messenger"), shall prepare the way for the coming of the Lord by purifying and refining God's people, as silver and gold are refined.*

<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.

READING: Philippians 1:3-11

*The apostle Paul was the pastor of many new churches. He writes in this letter about his joy to be in partnership with the Christians of Philippi. Listen to how tender-hearted Paul - sometimes a stern preacher - is with his friends as he encourages them to grow in love and knowledge with the assurance that Christ will complete the work begun in them.*

<sup>3</sup>I thank my God every time I remember you, <sup>4</sup>constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, <sup>5</sup>because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup>I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup>It is right for me to think this way about all of you because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and

confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup>For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup>And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight <sup>10</sup>to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, <sup>11</sup>having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

HYMN

*"Hark, the Glad Sound!"*

Green # 35

Hark, the glad sound! The Savior comes, the Savior promised long;  
Let ev'ry heart prepare a throne and ev'ry voice a song.

He comes the pris'ners to release, in Satan's bondage held,  
The gates of brass before him burst, the iron fetters yield.

He comes the broken heart to bind, the bleeding soul to cure,  
And with the treasures of his grace to bless the humble poor.

CCLI Song # 2872960 CCLI License # 1713417

SERMON - *It is tough work, preparing our hearts, opening them up to receive the transforming Word of God, and then for the mind to hear the invocation of God for us to be proclaimers of God's Kingdom. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it!*

HYMN

*"I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light"*

Blue # 649

I want to walk as a child of the light, I want to follow Jesus.  
God set the stars to give light to the world, the star of my life is Jesus.

***In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike,  
The Lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.***

I want to see the brightness of God, I want to look at Jesus.  
Clear Sun of righteousness, shine on my path and show me the way to the Father.

I'm looking for the coming of Christ, I want to follow Jesus.  
When we have run with patience the race, we shall know the joy of Jesus.

CCLI Song # 89848 CCLI License # 1713417

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### WORDS OF INSTITUTION

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

### BLESSING & PRAYER FOR HOLY COMMUNION

**Holy God, we long for your peace and trust in your promise; we hear your call to turn toward you, to change our lives and welcome you in. You meet us here and fill our minds with your wisdom and our hearts with your peace. May we be open to the challenge of your dream of wholeness for all. In the name of the Jesus, the one who is coming, we pray.**

### BENEDICTION & SENDING

A new day is dawning! Despite what we see and hear in the world around us, the sunrise is coming. When it comes, it will break through the darkness of our world—darkness caused by violence and death and hunger and despair. And all those who now sit huddled in the shadows will be able to rise and walk with confidence in the light. God is with us!

**We live as God's servants in Jesus' name.**

This is Good News! God's Grace is greater than our wildest imagination. God's Grace embraces us where we are, drawing us out to be the people we were created to be. God's blessings go with us. And his Son, Jesus Christ, shows us how to live re-shaped in his love. And the blessing of the living Holy Spirit joyfully empowers us in witness. Amen?

**Amen! We go in Christ's name, to love and serve!**

*Scripture portions are reprinted from Words for Worship, copyright 2015 Augsburg Fortress. Used by permission. Scripture quotations from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. All rights reserved. Used by permission.*

**Worship, as an action, continues to change.**

**Use this space to guide your thoughts as the Spirit may lead you.**

**Use this time to center your distractions in order to help activate your worship.**

This week the focus is on prophecies of God's coming, God's restoration, and God's justice and peace. Yet, in each reading there is a call to prepare to receive the promise in some way. In Malachi, there is the purifying work that will happen when God's messenger comes, and the people are to seek for, and take delight in, the coming one. In Paul's prayer for the Philippians, he expresses his desire for them to grow in love and wisdom, and to trust that God will complete the work that God has begun in them.

Finally, the Gospel narrative of John's coming speaks of John's call to the people to repent and be baptized in preparation for the coming one. The message this week, then, is this: God is

always coming, always available to God's people, and always working for restoration. But, receiving God's coming takes preparation, and so God sends a messenger to do this work, to prepare God's people for God's coming.

The challenge is for us to embrace the work of preparation for ourselves – opening ourselves to God's restoring, cleansing and disturbing work, and making our hearts ready for us to become, in turn, messengers of God's restorative justice and mercy to the world.

How much of the day do we spend in reaction? So much pain and injustice are caused simply because we react in fear, anger, self-protection or simply impatience. However, if we can develop a prepared heart, we can more easily slow down, reflect and then act with wisdom and grace.

Preparation – particularly of the heart – is restorative. It's a proactive stance that frees us from ourselves and our destructive or unhelpful patterns of behavior and moves us into a life that more easily considers, serves and brings restoration to others. This work of heart preparation includes the constant discipline of repentance; the constant awareness of God's forgiveness and transforming work; the patience to allow God's work to unfold in a time frame that ensures thorough healing and restoration; and the openness to be a voice that helps others to see God's work.

In a world of suffering and conflict, it can be difficult to remember and cling to God's promises of justice and restoration. This is why the work of preparation, both individually and collectively, is such an important and constant spiritual practice. Only when we make listening and watching for God's messengers a constant discipline can we perceive what God is doing and cooperate with the Reign of God in our lives.

*John van de Laar at [sacredise.com](http://sacredise.com)*