

## Bible Study for the second Sunday in Advent Dec 8, 2024

### Our texts for this Sunday are:

- Luke 3:1-6
- Malachi 3:1-4

### Luke 3:1-6

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.’”

What questions do you have for this passage? What feels confusing?

It is said that passages hold both Law and Gospel for us. How might this passage have Gospel (Good News) for our lives? How might it have Law (conviction) for our lives?

The Gospel of Luke has more historical details than any other Gospel account. Why might the writer see these details as important to the story? And what might be the motive/reasoning for this list of “who’s who” in 1<sup>st</sup> century Jerusalem?

Why do you think God didn’t choose one of the seven powerful men listed in this passage to “make the path straight?” They had the means (resources) and the audience (people would listen to them) to accomplish it. What might God be up to in choosing a nobody like John?

What does this tell us about the people that God uses (read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31)? What might that mean for us?

How does Luke summarize John’s message in verse 3? What kind of a baptism was he preaching? What was this designed to do for (and to) the people?

John’s message is about a “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” Talk about what you believe sin is (and maybe what it is not) and what it does to our relationship with God and each other?

The Greek word for repentance means (literally) *to turn around*. How might that message of turning be meant to affect how we live? Said another way, what are we turning away from and turning towards?

In what ways are you/we (as a church) tempted to minimize the importance of repentance? Why is that?

What role should repentance play in our lives? As (ELCA) Lutherans we tend to focus on forgiveness rather than repentance...do you agree with that?

### **Malachi 3:1-4**

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.

Look up the process of refining metal. How does that sound as something that God needs to do to His followers...meaning you and me?

In what ways do you think God works to *purify* and *refine* God's people? What aspect of today's church (and her people) do you think most needs *refining*?

If someone were to come with a *refining message*, meaning "you need to change *this* in your life" ....how do you suppose you'd respond to that? (asking for a friend 😊).

Why would God choose ordinary people to bring really hard (and not well received) messages?

In your opinion, and knowing the current political climate of hardline division, how much specific *political conversation* should be heard from the pulpit? How does a preacher speak into this climate when both sides think God is doing the refining on the other side (and not them)?