



St. John's Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



John the Baptist – Luke 3:1-20

January 27, 2019

8:30 & 10:30 Service of the Word

Who are the important people in the world? Look at the headlines online or in a newspaper. Before talking about John the Baptist, the gospel writer Luke lists the important people of his day: the governor, the rulers, and the high priests. But then he says the word of God came to John the Baptist in the wilderness. John is a pivotal figure who stands between the Old Testament and the New Testament. And we see here that God will not be working through the normal channels of power and leadership.

Welcome to worship today!

If you are visiting with us we invite you to sign the Guest Book in the back of the sanctuary.

Nursery care is available during the service. Please see one of the ushers if you need more information.

† GATHERING †

Prelude and Announcements

Gathering Hymn My Lord, What a Morning
(For music turn to Hymn 438 in the Red Hymnal)

Refrain

**My Lord, what a morning;
my Lord, what a morning;
oh my Lord, what a morning,
when the stars be-gin to fall.**

- 1. You'll hear the trumpet sound,
to wake the nations underground,
looking to my God's right hand,
when the stars begin to fall. *Refrain***
- 2. You'll hear the sinner cry,
to wake the nations underground,
looking to my God's right hand,
when the stars begin to fall. *Refrain***
- 3. You'll hear the Christian shout,
to wake the nations underground,
looking to my God's right hand,
when the stars begin to fall. *Refrain***

Text and music: African American Spiritual

Greeting (2 Corinthians 13:13)

A: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

A: Let us pray...

Holy God, creator of light and giver of goodness, your voice moves over the waters. Immerse us in your grace, and transform us by your Spirit, that we may follow after your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

† WORD †

First Reading Amos 5:10-15

¹⁰They hate the one who reproves in the gate,
and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.

¹¹Therefore because you trample on the poor
and take from them levies of grain,
you have built houses of hewn stone,
but you shall not live in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards,
but you shall not drink their wine.

¹²For I know how many are your transgressions,
and how great are your sins—
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,
and push aside the needy in the gate.

¹³Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time;
for it is an evil time.

¹⁴Seek good and not evil,
that you may live;
and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you,
just as you have said.

¹⁵Hate evil and love good,
and establish justice in the gate;
it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts,
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

After the reading the reader may say: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Scripture Poetry Psalm 51:14-19 (*Read responsively*)

A: Save me, bring back my joy,
support me, strengthen my will.

**C: Then I will teach your way
and sinners will turn to you.**

A: Help me, stop my tears,
and I will sing your goodness.

**C: Lord, give me words
and I will shout your praise.**

A: When I offer a burnt offering,
the gift does not please you.

**C: So I offer my shattered spirit;
a changed heart you welcome.**

Second Reading Luke 3:1-7

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, 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; ⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

After the reading the reader may say: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Reflections by R. Alan Culpepper in *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, Volume 9, Pg. 81-2

1. The first several verses fix the time and political circumstances of John's call. The story begins with a roll call of important persons: governors and kings, even the high priest. In surprising contrast, however, the “word of God” comes not to any of these but to an unknown prophet out in the wilderness. The redemptive work of which Mary sang in the Magnificat is under way: “He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly”. In all ages, God's work proceeds among the poor and the dispossessed. A middle-class church in a nominally Christian society that enjoys religious liberty will have a hard time grasping the fact that Luke does not use these terms in a merely metaphorical or spiritual sense.

2. Moreover, the redemptive events that began with John in a remote corner of Judea were, by God's design, the beginning of the fulfillment of God's concern for the salvation of “all flesh.” Repeatedly in Luke we find this theme underscored. Our human tendency is to draw a circle around God's activity and limit it to our own kind of people and the causes that are important in our eyes. But God's concern for all continually pushes us to break across the boundaries that we set for it. In many respects, the story of the ministry of Jesus is the story of God's challenge to social, ethnic, economic, and racial barriers to the spread of

the gospel. “All flesh” always includes precisely those groups who are not present in our religious assemblies, either because we have not allowed them to be there or because we have maintained cultural patterns that have excluded them.

3. Because God’s redemptive work is still unfinished – the salvation of “all flesh” has not yet been realized – John serves as a role model for the church. The Gospel announces not only what God has done through Jesus but also what God is still in the process of doing. All who hear “the word of God” are called to declare what God is doing in our midst and to point ahead to the fulfillment of God’s reign as king. John was a forerunner, announcing the great things of God that are yet to come, a vision of a society redeemed and renewed by the vision of the prophets. As John’s next preaching shows, he held the vision before others, issued a challenge for them, and called for repentance. He is, therefore, an appropriate model for the church as it seeks to recover its role as a prophetic voice in a secular culture.

Hymn Prepare the Royal Highway
(For music turn to Hymn 264 in the Red Hymnal)

1. Prepare the royal highway;

**The King of kings is near!
Let ev’ry hill and valley
A level road appear!
Then greet the King of glory,
Foretold in sacred story:**

Refrain **Hosanna to the Lord,
For he fulfills God’s Word!**

2. God’s people, see him coming:

**Your own eternal king!
Palm branches strew before him!
Spread garments! Shout and sing!
God’s promise will not fail you!
No more shall doubt assail you! *Refrain***

3. Then fling the gates wide open

**To greet your promised king!
Your king, yet ev’ry nation
Its tribute too may bring.
All lands will bow before him;
Their voices join your singing: *Refrain***

**4. His is no earthly kingdom;
It comes from heav'n above.
His rule is peace and freedom
And justice, truth and love.
So let your praise be sounding
For kind-ness so abounding: Refrain**

Text: Frans Mikael Franzen, 1772-1847; Music: Swedish folk tune, 14th century

Third Reading Luke 7-18

⁷John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” ¹⁰And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” ¹¹In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” ¹²Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” ¹³He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” ¹⁸So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

After the reading the reader may say: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Reflections by R. Alan Culpepper in *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, Volume 9, Pg. 86-7

1. John rebuked the Israelites who dismissed God's claims on them by appealing to their heritage as descendants of Abraham. The temptation

to self-justification is universal however. With what rationalizations do we dismiss God's calls to us?

The civil-religion rationalization claims that God needs us because we are a Christian nation.

The pietist rationalization offers individual piety as a substitute for genuine commitment, while limiting religion to matters of the heart and one's private relationship to God.

The universalist rationalization maintains that one's response to God really doesn't make a great deal of difference, since ultimately all will experience God's grace anyway.

Whatever our modern equivalent to the appeal of Abraham, John's call comes ringing, "From these very stones..."

2. Another of the haunting phrases from John's preaching is "fruits worthy of repentance." To say that we can never be worthy of God's grace is to miss the point of John's challenge. John calls instead for a change of life-style that reflects the genuineness of our repentance. Just as false love is not love at all, so also repentance that is not sincere is not repentance. There is an integrity to the repentant. Their priorities, commitments, personal relationships, passion for peace and justice, and their unplanned acts of compassion all give evidence of their repentance.

3. John's preaching contains three emphases: a prophetic warning against the coming judgment, a call to justice and compassion in our dealings with others, and a confession of the coming Messiah. Think for a moment about these three emphases and their expression in contemporary churches. Each congregation has its own unique blend of heritage, theology, setting, style of worship, etc. Some churches strongly emphasize one or another of the themes of John's preaching – some spend their time interpreting prophecy; others are involved in social action; while others just praise Jesus. Is any one of these emphases by itself a sufficient gospel? No. All three strands of John's preaching must receive due attention.

Hymn Christ, Be Our Light

(For music turn to Hymn 715 in the Red Hymnal)

1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

**Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.**

Refrain **Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.**

2. **Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice. *Refrain***
3. **Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed. *Refrain***
4. **Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone. *Refrain***
5. **Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
signs of your kingdom come. *Refrain***

Text: Bernadette Farrell, b. 1957; Music: Bernadette Farrell

Fourth Reading Luke 3:19-20

¹⁹But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰added to them all by shutting up John in prison.

After the reading the reader may say: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Reflections by R. Alan Culpepper in *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, Volume 9, Pg. 88

1. The sordid story of Anitpas and Herodias is a study in human evil and its consequences. How ironic that the prophet calling for repentance, justice, and compassion is put to death by those seeking only their own pleasure and position.
2. John had done his work, however – the one coming after him would be even mightier than he. On the other hand, Antipas and Herodias would

eventually reach for more than they could grasp and bring about their own ruin.

3. The righteous do not always succeed, and the wicked are not always overthrown, but evil is eventually self-destructive. And in the end God will triumph over the worst that we can do.

Hymn of the Day God of Grace and God of Glory
(For music see Hymn 705 in the Red Hymnal)

1. **God of grace and God of glory,
on your people pour your pow'r;
crown your ancient church's story;
bring its bud to glorious flow'r.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.**
2. **Lo! The hosts of evil round us
scorn the Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us
free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
for the living of these days,
for the living of these days.**
3. **Cure your children's war-ing madness;
bend our pride to your control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss your kingdom's goal,
lest we miss your kingdom's goal.**
4. **Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore;
let the gift of your salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving you whom we adore,
serving you whom we adore.**

Apostles' Creed

A: We confirm our faith with the Apostles' Creed

**C: I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

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

Prayer of the People "Grant Me Your Sense of Timing" from *Guerillas of Grace* by Ted Loder

O God of all seasons and senses,
grant me your sense of timing
to submit gracefully
and rejoice quietly
in the turn of the seasons.

In this season of short days and long nights,
of gray and white and cold,
teach me the lessons of waiting:
of the snow joining the mystery
of the hunkered-down seeds
growing in their sleep
watching over by gnarled-limbed, grandparent trees
resting from autumn's staggering energy;
of the silent, whirling earth
circling to race back home to the sun.

O God, grant me your sense of timing.

In this season of short days and long nights,
of gray and white and cold,
teach me the lessons of endings:
children growing, friends leaving,
jobs concluding,
stages finishing,
grieving over,
grudges over,
blaming over,
excuses over.

O God, grant me your sense of timing.

In this season of short days and long nights,
of gray and white and cold,
teach me the lessons of beginnings,
that such waitings and ending
may be a starting place,
a planting of seeds
which bring to birth
what is ready to be born-
something right and just and different,
a new song,
a deeper relationship,
a fuller love-
in the fullness of your time.

O God, grant me your sense of timing.

C: Amen.

Peace

A: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: And also with you.

A: Let us share that peace with one another.

The congregation may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.

✠ THANKSGIVING ✠

Offering

Hymn of Thanksgiving As the offering is brought forward the congregation sings:

Lord Let My Heart Be Good Soil

For music turn to Hymn 713 in the Blue Hymnal

**Lord, let my heart be good soil,
open to the seed of your Word.**

**Lord, let my heart be good soil,
where love can grow and peace is understood.**

**When my heart is hard,
break the stone away.**

**When my heart is cold,
warm it with the day.**

**When my heart is lost,
lead me on your way.**

Lord, let my heart,

Lord, let my heart,

Lord, let my heart be good soil.

Text and music: Handt Hanson, b. 1950, Copyright 1985 Prince of Peace Publishing/Changing Church, Inc.

Offering Prayer

A: Let us pray: God of all creation,

C: all you have made is good, and your love endures forever. You bring forth bread from the earth and fruit from the vine. Nourish us with these gifts, that we might be for the world signs of your gracious presence in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Thanksgiving Prayer

A: Let us pray:

Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God,

C: we give you thanks and praise.

A: By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, wisdom for life with you. For your Word of life, O God,

C: we give you thanks and praise.

A: Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness: forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God,

C: we give you thanks and praise.

A: Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.

C: Amen.

Lord's Prayer

A: Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**C: 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.**

† SENDING †

Blessing

A: The God of glory dwell in you richly, name you beloved, and shine brightly on your path; and the blessing of almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you now and remain with you always.

C: Amen.

Sending Hymn We Are Called
(For music turn to Hymn 720 in the Red Hymnal)

**1. Come! Live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom,
To live in the freedom of the city of God.**

Refrain

**We are called to act with justice,
we are called to love tenderly;**

**we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God.**

2. Come! Open your heart!

**Show your mercy to all those in fear!
We are called to be hope for the hopeless
so hatred and blindness will be no more. *Refrain***

3. Sing! Sing a new song!

**Sing of that great day when all will be one!
God will reign, and we'll walk with each other
as sisters and brothers united in love. *Refrain***

Text and Music: David Haas, Copyright 1988 GIA Publication Inc.

Dismissal

A: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C: **God's Work. Our Hands.**

Worship assistants TODAY:

Greeters and Ushers	John and Linda Thompson
Acolyte	Katya Kurilovitch
Nursery Care	Beth Perdan
Counters	John and Linda Thompson
Coffee Hour	Annual Meeting – Sub Sale

Worship assistants for next Sunday, February 3, 2019

Greeters and Ushers	Sara DeMuzio and Tricia Kolczynski
Acolyte	Viala Wagner
Nursery Care	Judy VanDeVelde
Counters	Bruce Boncke and Art Fields
Coffee Hour	<i>Please sign up.</i>

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St. John's Lutheran Church

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The Rev. Jonathan Deibler, Pastor
Heidi Griffith, Music Director