

## Third Sunday in Advent December 17, 2017

Year B – the Gospel of Mark

**LUTHERAN**

# **LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY**

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.  
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the  
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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[www.bethlehemplutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies](http://www.bethlehemplutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies)

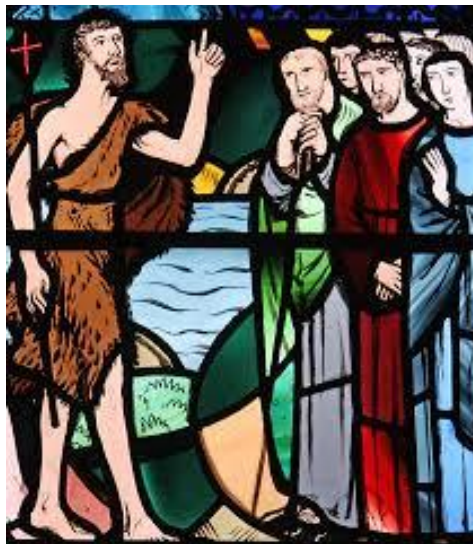
or

**through Facebook at either “Living the Lutheran Lectionary”,  
“Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Parma” or “Harold Weseloh”**

December 14, 2017 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44130

*Presented as a part of the bible study/worship at a weekday service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church setting, bi-weekly at an assisted living site, St. Philip Lutheran Church, Cleveland (First Sunday of the month at 11:00am) and used by Lutherans in Africa. Contact [puritaspastor@hotmail.com](mailto:puritaspastor@hotmail.com) for details.*



<https://readingacts.com/tag/john-the-baptist/>

### **Hymn of the Day**

**Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 345 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 60**

**“Hark, a thrilling voice is sounding”**

Edward Caswall, 1814-1878 "...Caswall's translations of Latin hymns from the Roman Breviary and other sources have a wider circulation in modern hymnals than those of any other translator, Dr. Neale alone excepted. This is owing to his general faithfulness to the originals, and the purity of his rhythm, the latter feature specially adapting his hymns to music, and for congregational purposes. His original compositions, although marked by considerable poetical ability, are not extensive in their use, their doctrinal teaching being against their general adoption outside the Roman communion..."

[https://hymnary.org/person/Caswall\\_Edward](https://hymnary.org/person/Caswall_Edward)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCrEt11-SFU> "Sung by the Plymouth Choir and Congregation of First Plymouth Church, Lincoln Nebraska on December 2014. Arrangement by Richard Webster"

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

**Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Revised Common Lectionary, (RCL), the same reading (*Next Week: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; RCL, the same reading*)**

"...The message in Isaiah 61 is clear enough: comfort and joy! In fact, I am singing "God Rest You, Merry Gentlemen" in my head as I write this. The passage from the book of Isaiah as it appears in the lectionary picks up on the language of comfort found in Isaiah 40 read last week. It expands the images of comfort, reward, and restoration. This week the lectionary conveniently leaves out 61:5-7 which addresses the question of identity and group formation prevalent in the last part of the book, and seen in the reading from Isaiah 64 during the first week of Advent. The omission of these verses here allow the reading to function as a build up to the hope of Christmas..."

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=3493](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3493) [Corrine Carvalho](#)  
Professor, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN

### **The Year of the LORD's Favor**

61 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor;<sup>[a]</sup>  
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;<sup>[b]</sup>  
<sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;

<sup>3</sup> to grant to those who mourn in Zion—  
 to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,  
 the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
 the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;  
 that they may be called oaks of righteousness,  
 the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.<sup>[c]</sup>

<sup>4</sup> They shall build up the ancient ruins;  
 they shall raise up the former devastations;  
 they shall repair the ruined cities,  
 the devastations of many generations.

<sup>5</sup> *Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks;  
 foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers;*

<sup>6</sup> *but you shall be called the priests of the LORD;  
 they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God;  
 you shall eat the wealth of the nations,  
 and in their glory you shall boast.*

<sup>7</sup> *Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion;  
 instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot;  
 therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion;  
 they shall have everlasting joy.*

<sup>8</sup> For I the LORD love justice;  
 I hate robbery and wrong;<sup>[d]</sup>  
 I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
 and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

<sup>9</sup> Their offspring shall be known among the nations,  
 and their descendants in the midst of the peoples;  
 all who see them shall acknowledge them,  
 that they are an offspring the LORD has blessed.

<sup>10</sup> I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;  
 my soul shall exult in my God,  
 for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;  
 he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
 as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,  
 and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

<sup>11</sup> For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,  
 and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up,  
 so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
 to sprout up before all the nations.

- a. [Isaiah 61:1](#) Or *afflicted*
- b. [Isaiah 61:1](#) Or *the opening* [of the eyes] *to those who are blind*; Septuagint and recovery of sight *to the blind*
- c. [Isaiah 61:3](#) Or *that he may display his beauty*
- d. [Isaiah 61:8](#) Or *robbery with a burnt offering*

“As has been the case for the past two weeks, the Old Testament reading for this Sunday comes from the latter chapters of the book of Isaiah.

Starkly different from chapters 1-39, which are filled with words of judgment and warning, chapters 40-66 are filled with words of promise and hope. The exiles banished to Babylon may return home to Jerusalem, and the rebuilding of the city may begin.

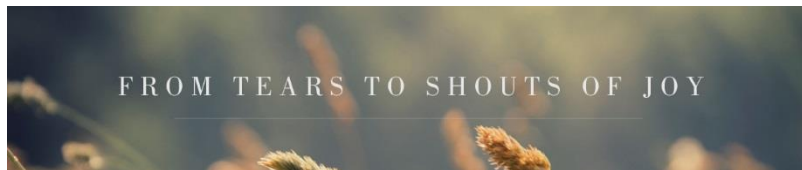
There are three main characters in this passage: The LORD, the prophet (“me”), and the people of Judah (“they”). Meaning in this passage is wrapped up in the relationships among these three characters.

**The LORD** The pericope opens by describing the spirit, or breath, of the LORD...

**The servant-prophet** The pericope opens with the news that the spirit of the Lord GOD is upon “me.” This begs the question of just who “me” is. Chapter 61 has often been associated with Isaiah 49:1-11, one of the so-called “Servant Songs” in the book of Isaiah where the LORD answers the servant, that is Israel, in a time of favor (49:8; 61:2) and proclaims release to prisoners (49:9; 61:1). What the LORD did with and through the servant Israel in chapter 49, another servant-prophet is commissioned to carry out in chapter 61...

**The people of Judah** The final persona in the passage is the people of Judah, in particular those who have returned from exile. They too have a task. As with the prophet, the tasks given to the people are less command than they are promise and permission. The time of rebuilding has arrived. They need not live in the midst of what has been destroyed any more but may begin the challenging yet exciting work of restoration...”

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2255](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2255) **Kristin J. Wendland** Ph.D. candidate in Old Testament, Princeton Theological Seminary



<http://www.sgclouisville.org/sovereign-grace-church-louisville-sermons/sermon/2016-10-02/from-tears-to-shouts-of-joy-c-j-mahaney-psalm-126>

**Psalm 126; RCL, Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55 (Psalm 89:1-5, (19-29; RCL, Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 or Luke 1:46b-55)**

*“It was with reference to some great and surprising deliverance of the people of God out of bondage and distress that this psalm was penned, most likely their return out of Babylon in Ezra’s time. Though Babylon be not mentioned here (as it is, [Ps. 137](#)) yet their captivity there was the most remarkable captivity both in itself and as their return out of it was typical of our redemption by Christ. Probably this psalm was penned by Ezra, or some of the prophets that came up with the first. We read of singers of the children of Asaph, that famous psalmist, who returned then, [Ezra 2:41](#). It being a song of ascents, in which the same things are twice repeated with advancement (v. 2, 3, and v. 4, 5), it is put here among the rest of the psalms that bear that title...”*

[https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Psa/Psa\\_126.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Psa/Psa_126.cfm)

## Restore Our Fortunes, O LORD A Song of Ascents.

126 When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.

<sup>2</sup> Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then they said among the nations,  
“The LORD has done great things for them.”

<sup>3</sup> The LORD has done great things for us;  
we are glad.

<sup>4</sup> Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like streams in the Negeb!\*

<sup>5</sup> Those who sow in tears  
shall reap with shouts of joy!

<sup>6</sup> He who goes out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
bringing his sheaves with him.

\* “The name Negev in the Bible

The name Negev is the modern version of the original name Negeb (the Hebrew letter ב, *beth*, was once probably pronounced as a B but now as a V; that's why today some people are called Avraham instead of the classic [Abraham](#)), but it's not clear when the word נגב (*negeb*) became a name.

The word נגב (*negeb*) appears to have several meanings and the chances are excellent that we modern readers of the Bible are simply clueless about the whole compass of this word, and thus the name Negev. In Old Testament times, a country in the political sense would be known by border markers (or border towns) at its extremes and a ruler of sorts at its most pronounced city. A "region" would be known by some distinctly different feature, like mountains or a decidedly different climate. It's a bit of a mystery to which region the name or word נגב (*negeb*) was applied, and why. The area originally known as the נגב (*negeb*) appears to have been located somewhere in between [Egypt](#) and [Canaan](#) but the exact borders are quite unclear (Genesis 13:1-3)

Older versions of the Bible (KJV, Young, Darby, JSP) consistently translate our word with "the south" or "South Land" but modern translations (NAS, NIV) treat this word as a proper name when it seems appropriate. This obviously requires the translator to be insightful enough to know what the author meant to say, which isn't always easy. And the result is an unwanted association with the present day Negev region which is arguably not the same as the area named Negeb back then. And then, to modern readers the word *negev* is foreign and specific but to a [Hebrew](#) audience, it was an ordinary word that meant ordinary things and was used to describe many things other than what we call the Negev.

Here at [Abarim](#) Publications we're notoriously unhip, and we prefer to not transliterate the word נגב as the proper name Negeb or Negeb but to translate it as south, South or the South Land.” <http://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Negev.html#.WinTRIKotMx>

“We’ve just heard three psalms that are appointed for this Advent season, [Psalms 80](#), [85](#), and [126](#). Did you happen to catch what they have in common? There was a connecting theme running through all three of these psalms. And here it is. It is the prayer, in one form or another, that goes something like this: “Restore Us, O God.”...

[Psalm 126](#): “Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.” And the day is coming, dear friends, the day is coming, when Christ will come again, and wipe every tear from our eyes! No more sorrows. No more grief. No more death. No more sin. The restoration of our bodies, in perfect wholeness. The restoration of this earth and this creation, restored even better than the paradise of Eden. Yes, that is the day of restoration we are looking forward to, and it is based on the restoration already accomplished in Christ. So it is sure. It is certain...” <http://steadfastlutherans.org/2014/12/restore-us-o-god-sermon-on-psalms-80-85-126-by-pr-charles-henrickson/> Pastor Charles Henrickson



**1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; RCL, the same reading** (*Romans 16:25-27; RCL, the same reading*)

“Our text gives us three impossible commands ([1 Thess. 5:16-18](#)): “Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” If Paul had only said, “Rejoice a lot, pray often, and try to be thankful,” I maybe could say, “Okay, I’ll try to do that!” But no one honestly can say, “I rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks!” And you can’t resolve, “I’ll start obeying those commands today!” Next week, you couldn’t honestly say, “I’ve kept those commands this past week. There wasn’t a single moment when I wasn’t rejoicing, praying, and giving thanks!”

So what do we do with these impossible commands?...”

<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-20-three-impossible-commands-1-thessalonians-516-18>

“<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup> Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Do not despise prophecies, <sup>21</sup> but test everything; hold fast what is good. <sup>22</sup> Abstain from every form of evil.

<sup>23</sup> Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

“Rejoice always.”

The third Sunday in Advent has traditionally been known as *Gaudete Sunday*<sup>\*</sup>, taken from the opening of the Psalm appointed for the day so long ago. That Psalm began with the Latin command to rejoice. Today’s reading from the epistles also begins with the command to rejoice. In this reading, which is the conclusion of his first letter to the church in Thessalonica, Paul sends words of encouragement and support...

Continuing the themes introduced in the epistle readings for the First and Second Sundays of Advent, we once again return to the theme of the delay of the *parousia*. Will we, in fact, see the end time?...

*Gaudete*, “Rejoice always.” The instructions in this, the conclusion of the letter, are very brief and very general. Furthermore, the verbs are all plural. Paul is not speaking to individuals as much as he is to the entire community in Thessalonica. They are all to rejoice. And when? Not at a particular time, nor only in good times, but always. They are to pray always. They are to give thanks not just for the good things that happen to them, but “in all circumstances.”... It was not easy to follow Christ. But Paul’s call is simple and direct, rejoice, pray, give thanks always and no matter what happens...

The ending of the reading serves as a wonderful benediction for all of us as our celebration of the first coming of Christ and a reminder to keep our eyes and our lives focused on the second coming. We will be kept holy, “sound and blameless” (1 Thessalonians 5:23) for that day, and it is not through our work alone, but by “The one who calls [us]” and who “is faithful” (1 Thessalonians 5:24)...” [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2280](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2280)  
**Lucy Lind Hogan**, Hugh Latimer Elderdice Professor of Preaching and Worship, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.

“...On Gaudete Sunday rose-coloured vestments may be worn instead of violet (or instead of blue, in the Anglican and some Lutheran and other Protestant traditions), which is otherwise prescribed for every day in the season of Advent. Gaudete Sunday was also known as “Rose Sunday”.<sup>[5]</sup>

In churches that have an Advent wreath, the rose coloured candle is lit in addition to two of the violet (or blue) coloured candles, which represent the first two Sundays of Advent. Despite the otherwise somber readings of the season of Advent, which has as a secondary theme the need for penitence, the readings on the third Sunday emphasize the joyous anticipation of the Lord's coming...” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaudete\\_Sunday](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaudete_Sunday)



## “The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 1st Chapter”

**John 1:6-8, 19-28; RCL, the same reading (Luke 1:26-38; RCL, the same reading)**

“The Gospel readings for the Third Sunday of Advent in Years A, B, and C focus on the person of John.

This year, the focus is on John's role as the primary witness to Jesus, the Messiah. The Gospel of Luke gives us greater insight into the relationship of John and Jesus, but we will wait with this focus until the text assigned for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, Luke 1:26-38.

The opening verses of the Gospel of John bear witness to the uniqueness of Jesus' identity: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This one was in the beginning with God" (1:1-2). Jesus is God; Jesus is the Word. These identities are inseparable, and John is the first human witness to this unique relationship of the Father and the Son.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light..." (continued after the reading)

<sup>9</sup> The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

<sup>11</sup> He came to his own,<sup>[a]</sup> and his own people<sup>[b]</sup> did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son<sup>[c]</sup> from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") <sup>16</sup> For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God,<sup>[e]</sup> who is at the Father's side,<sup>[f]</sup> he has made him known.



## The Testimony of John the Baptist

<sup>19</sup> And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” <sup>20</sup> He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” <sup>21</sup> And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” <sup>22</sup> So they said to him, “Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” <sup>23</sup> He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight<sup>[g]</sup> the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”

<sup>24</sup> (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) <sup>25</sup> They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” <sup>26</sup> John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, <sup>27</sup> even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.” <sup>28</sup> These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

- a. [John 1:11](#) Greek *to his own things*; that is, to his own domain, or to his own people
- b. [John 1:11](#) *People* is implied in Greek
- c. [John 1:14](#) Or *only One*, or *unique One*
- d. [John 1:16](#) Or *grace in place of grace*
- e. [John 1:18](#) Or *the only One, who is God*; some manuscripts *the only Son*
- f. [John 1:18](#) Greek *in the bosom of the Father*
- g. [John 1:23](#) Or *crying out*, ‘*In the wilderness make straight*

**“This is the Gospel of the Lord”      “Praise to You, O Christ”**

“...The Gospel of John identifies John in a unique way and serves as a marvelous Advent text. Unlike the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Gospel of John identifies this person only as John, and does not attach his identity as "the baptist" with his person. Only in a very unique way do we hear about the baptism of John in his words: "I baptize with water" (1:26), and in reference to Jesus, John responds, "I myself did not know him, but I came baptizing with water for this reason that he might be revealed to Israel" (1:31).

John bears witness to the baptism event in this way: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him but the one who sent to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God" (1:32-34).

These verses are not included in the assigned text for this Sunday, but they are very important in filling out the portrait of John and his role in this gospel. What we begin to see is that the figure of John in the Gospel of John plays a unique role. John is not identified as the forerunner of the Messiah, which is his role in Matthew, Mark and Luke. In the Gospel of John, he is portrayed as the primary witness to Jesus as he looks back on his relationship to Jesus. John is the first person in this gospel to bear witness and confess that Jesus is "the Son of God" (1:34). This confession is heard from a human witness not until the very end of the Gospel of Mark when

we hear the confession of the centurion standing at the foot of the cross as Jesus has breathed his last: "Truly this man was God's Son!" (Mark 15:39)...

On this Third Sunday of Advent in Year B, we have a unique opportunity to identify the role that all persons of faith are called to by God. Each one of us who has heard the words of this text have seen the importance of John's witness to Jesus. Like John, God commissions us to bear witness to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the one who has come in the flesh, the one who is here with us, and the one who will come again in his reign as Lord of all.

In this, there is no greater witness to the truth of God's work of salvation.

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=186](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=186) **Paul S. Berge**  
Emeritus Professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.



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**If you took the challenge to produce a handwritten copy of the book of Mark by Christ the King Sunday, November 25, 2018, you should be almost finished with Chapter 1. Chapters 2 and 3 are up for January.**



<http://faceforwardcolumbus.com/tag/advent/>