

The Lutheran Hymnal 63

We Have the Privilege of Being Modern-Day John the Baptists!

Sunday, December 11 at 8:00 & 10:45

Third Sunday in Advent – 2005

Wednesday Services at 11 & 7; Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Each year on the Third Sunday in Advent, our focus turns to John the Baptist, the *forerunner of Christ!* That *name* reminds us when God sent John – *just ahead of Christ!* We also remember why God sent John – *in order to announce Jesus' first coming and testify about Jesus!* And for what purpose? “...so that through him [John] all men might believe.” (NIV John 1:7)

Today's Sermon Goal: As God worked through John the Baptist to point people to Jesus in his day, may God also use us to point people to Jesus in our day.

So how did God use John the Baptist? We are going to answer that question by focusing on the words of hymn 63, “On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry.” **But how might God use even us?** St. Paul described the *living of our Christian lives* as letters, “known and read by everybody.” (NIV 2 Corinthians 3:2)

1. **Stanza 1:**

- a. **On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry Announces that the Lord is nigh;** // John announced to the people: The Lord is *near!* The Lord is *close!* Even today, *with our words and actions*, we are communicating the fact that Jesus could come again at any moment!

- b. **Come, then, and hearken, for he brings Glad tidings from the King of kings.** // John could have proclaimed: This is the One who is near, the One sent to “proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ... to comfort all who mourn ...” (NIV Isaiah 61:1, 3) Even today, *with our words and actions*, God can use us to show forth the reality that Jesus has +freed us, +released us, and +comforted us!

2. **Stanza 2: Then cleansed be every Christian breast And furnished for so great a Guest. Yea, let us each our hearts prepare For Christ to come and enter there.** // Through John God called the people to “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” (NIV Matthew 3:2) Even today *it's closer than ever*; therefore, *by Word and Sacrament*, may God move all to repent and believe!
3. **Stanza 3: For Thou art our Salvation, Lord, Our Refuge, and our great Reward. Without Thy grace our souls must fade And wither like a flower decayed.** // For John *in his day* and us *in our day*, we breathe a great sigh of relief! *Though we are all undeserving*, the Lord is our +salvation, +refuge, and +great reward! Such realities *transform* → our words, → our actions, and → our witness to others!
4. **Stanza 4: Lay on the sick Thy healing hand And make the fallen strong to stand; Show us the glory of Thy face Till beauty springs in every place.** // In John's day,

Jesus showed Himself to be God by His *miraculous physical healing*. In our day, Jesus has transformed our lives with His *miraculous spiritual healing*!

Furthermore, our lives show forth God's peace, because our confidence is in God, the faithful One, the One who called us, the One who will keep us "blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (NIV 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

5. **Stanza 5: All praise, eternal Son, to Thee Whose advent sets Thy people free, Whom, with the Father, we adore And Holy Ghost forevermore.** // Like John the Baptist, *we are so blessed by the Triune God!* He has done everything to save us from our sins; therefore, we respond with ✚praise, ✚adoration, and ✚thanksgiving!

Conclusion: But still, what are some practical ways that God might use us to point people to Jesus in our day? This story might help to get us thinking: In this country, in 1918, there was a terrible flu epidemic. During the height of that plague, churches and all public gathering places were ordered closed. Yet more than ever, it was then that people needed hope and consolation. Therefore, one resourceful pastor thought of the magnificent stained glass windows in his church. Those windows were very large and faced a road traveled by many people. Therefore, he had numerous floodlights placed inside the church, which lit up the windows on the outside to all who passed by. People saw:

- Jesus, the good shepherd, carrying a lamb!

- Jesus rescuing the one lost sheep while the ninety-nine rested in safety!
- Jesus praying in Gethsemane!
- Jesus on the cross!
- Jesus risen and triumphant!

The silent sermons of light and stained glass communicated a wonderful message to many! People who passed by the church would stop reverently, silently. They found themselves filled with new resolve and encouragement. They saw ever more clearly, in that age of sickness, the light of Christ which was coming into the world.

Even in our day, at this time of the year, we can communicate the message of Jesus with:

- The Christmas cards we send!
- The ornaments we place on our trees!
- The ways in which we decorate our homes!
- The Christmas presents we buy for others!

God is the Savior! He is the One who saved us and desires to save all people! As God worked through John the Baptist to point people to Jesus in his day, may God also use us to point people to Jesus in our day.

And all God's people said: ***Amen!***