

Second Sunday in Advent – 2022

Saturday, 12/3 at 4:00 & Sunday, 12/4 at 9:00



Text: Matthew 3:1-12 NAS 1995

Advent Wednesdays: Services at 11 & 7; Free Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: During the current church year, *which began last week*, many of our gospel readings will be from [the Gospel according to Matthew](#). At the end of [Matthew chapter 2](#), [Joseph](#), [Mary](#), and [the infant Jesus](#) had just returned from Egypt and settled in Nazareth. **Now, as we move into [chapter 3](#), we have jumped ahead about 29 years** to the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptizer.

As we move through this text, keep in mind that *Advent* means *coming*, and *Jesus' coming* calls for *repentance*!

1. **The Emphasis of John's Ministry:** ¹ **Now in those days** [*at the beginning of his ministry*] **John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,** ² **"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."**

- a. Unrepentant: In John's day, *most Jews were unrepentant; spiritually, they were like a wilderness.*
 - b. Highly skilled: Then and today, we create our own standards for godliness; for example, some might say:
 - ✦ I haven't murdered anyone, ✦ I am a decent person, and ✦ I go to church, *so I must be a Christian.*
 - c. Repent: Let us ✦ use **God's** standards, ✦ admit our sins, ✦ be sorry, ✦ trust in Jesus, and ✦ make a 180-degree turn! Why? Membership in the kingdom of heaven is essential; *only repentant people are members!*
2. **A Prophecy about John:** ³ **For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet [in chapter 40] when he said, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'"** // Isaiah prophesied about John; then, *at the right time, six months before the beginning of Jesus' ministry*, John began calling people to repent. Then and now, *the HS works repentance through law and gospel!*
 3. **A Description of John:** ⁴ **Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.** // John lived off the land; *his time and efforts were not consumed by the busyness and pleasures of the world.* May the Lord grant us lives that are ✦ simple and ✦ centered in Christ.
 4. **God's Work through John:** ⁵ **Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan;** ⁶ **and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.** // God convinced many people *that John was a true prophet*, so multitudes ✦ went, ✦ heard, ✦ confessed, and ✦ believed.

5. **When People are Repentant, it will be Obvious:** ⁷ **But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them,**
- a. **Align your life with your confession:** **“You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”** ⁸ **Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;** ⁹ **and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.”** // By coming to John for baptism, they were saying they were repentant – *but they had no evidence. John challenged them to show him their 180-degree turn. It is essential that our targets for living agree with God’s targets for living:*
- i. **Divine Service:** For some, *their target is Christmas Eve and Easter, but God’s target is for us to attend every week (Ex. 20:8).*
 - ii. **Forgiveness:** For some, *their target is to forgive those who are sorry, but God’s target for us is to fully forgive everyone (Mt. 6:14-15).*
 - iii. **Giving:** For some, *their target is a random number, but God’s target for us is to show our trust and thanks by faithfully giving a tithe (Mal. 3:8-10).*
- May our LIVING clearly show our REPENTANCE!***
- b. **Act NOW:** ¹⁰ **“The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”** // **What trees?** *The ones bearing no fruit.* When you use an axe, ➡ you lay it where you want to chop, then ➡ you swing it for the purpose of chopping! John was saying: **ACT NOW before you are chopped and burned!**

6. **John Compares His Baptism with Jesus' Baptism:** ¹¹ **“As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”** // In both baptisms *the HS was at work*:
- John:** He preached ➔ the HS worked ➔ people were repentant (sorry, trusting in the Messiah, turning from sin) ➔ baptized and ➔ received God's forgiveness.
 - Jesus:** He received the HS from the Father and poured Him out on the Day of Pentecost *as fire* (Acts 2:33).
7. **John Points Ahead to the Final Judgment:** ¹² **“[Jesus'] winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”**
- In His hand:** *Jesus is ready to act at any moment!*
 - Wheat and chaff:** The wheat are repentant ones; *their lives have made a radical turn **AND IT SHOWS***. The chaff may go through some right motions, but their hearts are unrepentant, *and **GOD SEES THEIR HEARTS***.
 - Unquenchable:** Fire that cannot be put out 😊.

Conclusion: God is calling all of us to repent *in every way that repentance is necessary in our lives*. Then He is calling us to ♦trust in Jesus and ♦be sure that we are righteous in His sight.

Let Us Pray: Father in heaven, since our targets do not always agree with Your targets, ♦show us Your will and ♦move us to make every necessary turn from sin to doing Your will!

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