

Sermon Luke 3 1 18 2nd S in Advent Series C

Sermon: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent

Text: Luke 3:1-18 (vv.3, 4)

Theme: Prepare the way to the LORD!

Goal: Advent is a time of preparation to receive the LORD who came, comes and will come again.

Dear Friends,

*Introduction: The season of Advent is a time of preparation not only for Christmas but also for receiving the Lord Jesus Christ in our daily lives and at His second coming. The Lord Jesus wants to come into our lives and remain with us to deliver us from sin and from the power of death, to strengthen us in our faith, and to motivate and empower us for service in His Kingdom. We need to prepare to receive Him, because without such preparation we will not be ready for His coming.* (Series C, p. 20)

John the Baptist had this special task to prepare the people for Jesus' coming, calling them to repentance, pointing at the promised Messiah for them, and guiding them in a new attitude of life as a result of repentance and faith.

I – Repent

John the Baptist was in the same line of the Old Testament prophets. In fact, he was the last of the prophets. Our text says that “the Word of God came to John in the desert”. This expression is common to the Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others. The Word of God came to them. They were not preaching by themselves, but they were proclaiming God's Word.

Their message was always calling people to repentance because they had gone astray from the way of the LORD; announcing judgment to those

who didn't repent and didn't return to God; proclaiming God's love and goodwill to receive His repented people back, pointing at "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29); and guiding them in the right way of God's Commandments.

Repentance is always part of the Christian preaching. We are never perfect, we are never without sin. We deserve God's wrath and by ourselves we are condemned. Therefore we begin every Service confessing our sins and asking for forgiveness. Forgiven by God's grace, we can worship Him and rejoice in Him!

In John's days, 400 years had passed since the last prophet, Malachi, had preached in the name of the LORD. Now John the Baptist was there. It was a big challenge for the people to listen to John and to come to his baptism. He was recognized as someone sent by God, and he presented himself as the accomplishment of the prophecy of Isaiah: He was a voice in the desert to prepare the way to the LORD (John 1:23), to prepare people to the Advent of the LORD!

## II – Receive

The promised KING was coming! People had to prepare themselves and to prepare the roads for the King. Some thought that John was the Messiah. But he denied it. He was only the messenger, the forerunner to announce to the people: The KING is coming! Prepare yourselves! Receive the King!

In the words of John, "one more powerful than I will come... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire... And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them".

When Jesus came and was baptized by John, some of the followers of John recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah and followed Him.

Among them we have Andrew and John, and soon after, Peter and James. In spite of all the preparation done by God through John the Baptist, few people received Jesus as the Savior sent by God. “He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11). Even He was proclaimed and celebrated as “the King that comes in the name of the Lord, the son of David” (Matthew 21:9) at the Triumphal Entry in Jerusalem, just some days after He was betrayed and put to death on the cross.

Repentance without faith in Christ is not true repentance. It is only sorrow. Advent points to Christ not only in the manger, but on the cross as well, and even further: His resurrection, ascension and second coming. Salvation summons all the events of Christ’s life on our behalf, which leads us to a new life.

### III – Fruits of Repentance and faith

John was very sharp in his preaching. He saw that many came to the baptism insincerely. He said that repentance is not just a matter of words, but a matter of attitude. “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.” To be member of a church is not guarantee of salvation, as the Jews thought at that time and many think so nowadays. Repentance and faith are followed by a life of obedience to God’s Commandments.

John gave very practical guidance to several people who asked him: “What should we do?” This means: *What repentance would mean in their case* (ABC 1210). As a general guideline he said: “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.” To the public workers and soldiers he counseled to be honest in their job, and to treat people with justice.

I am happy to see the shoe boxes under the tree and the Luther’s Loot box full every month. Many are bringing clothes and shoes as well. We

have so much, and many people have so little. We can share what we have as a sign of our faith and of our love to God and to the neighbor. These are some of the fruits God is expecting from us.

Conclusion: As a result of God's act sending His Son Jesus, and as a result of the Church preparation to receive the King sent by God, "all mankind will see God's salvation", said John, quoting Isaiah. God didn't want to be restricted to one people. He prepared salvation to all people! The good news proclaimed by the angels when Jesus was born was "for all the people" (Luke 2:10). "God so loved the world..." (John 3:16) said Jesus Himself. And He sent the disciples "to make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

The Advent Season and Christmas time is a good time to share the Gospel, to invite friends and relatives to come to the church. I was happy to see many visitors last Sunday. Invite them again! Bring others to worship God and to listen to His Word of repentance and salvation in Christ. The goal of our faith is eternal life. We are celebrating the first Advent of Jesus and preparing ourselves for His Second Advent. In the meantime, we receive Christ in His Word and in the Sacrament, living in fellowship with Him and with our brothers and sisters in Christ, doing His will. *We desire to serve Jesus Christ for the sake of the Gospel so that others might be directed to Him*(Series C, p. 23). Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle  
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