

Welcome to Worship at
Trinity Lutheran Church, Osceola, WI
Advent 2 - December 5, 2021

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. Amen.

Hymn #13 - *“There’s a Voice in the Wilderness Crying”*

**There’s a voice in the wilderness crying,
A call from the ways untrod:
Prepare in the desert a highway,
A highway for our God!
The valleys shall be exalted,
The lofty hills brought low;
Make straight all the crooked places
Where the Lord our God may go!**

**O Christians, you bring good tidings;
Get up to the heights and sing!
Proclaim to a desolate people
The coming of their King.
Like the flow’rs of the field they perish;
Like grass their works decay.
The pow’r and pomp of nations
Shall pass like a dream away;**

**But the Word of our God is eternal;
The arm of the Lord is strong.
He stands in the midst of the nations,
And he shall right the wrong.
He shall feed his flock like a shepherd,
The lambs shall gently hold,
To pastures of peace shall lead them,
And bring them safe to his fold.**

Confession of Sins:

P: Beloved in the Lord, let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

C: **Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You in our thoughts, words, and actions. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace and forgiveness for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. O Lord, have mercy on us!**

P: Upon this your confession, I as a called servant of Christ and His Word announce to you the grace of God, and in the place of and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

First Lesson: Malachi 3:1-7b

Look! I am sending my messenger! He will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord, whom you are seeking, will come to his temple! The Messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight, will surely come, says the Lord of Armies. But who can endure the day when he comes? Who will remain standing when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire, like launderers bleach! He will be seated like a refiner and a purifier of silver. He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and like silver. They will belong to the Lord and bring him an offering in righteousness. Judah and Jerusalem's offerings will be pleasing to the Lord as they were in the days of old, in years long ago. I will approach you to judge you. I will be quick to give testimony against those who practice occult arts, those who commit adultery, those who swear false oaths, those who cheat workers out of their wages, those who wrong a widow and a fatherless child, those who turn away a resident alien - all those who do not fear me, says the Lord of Armies. Certainly I, the Lord, do not change. That is why you, sons of Jacob, have not come to an end. Since the days of your fathers, you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of Armies. (EHV)

Psalm 24

Refrain: Let the Lord enter; he is the King of glory.

**The earth is the LORD's, and every thing in it,
The world, and all who 'live in it;**

**For he founded it up'on the seas
And established it upon the 'waters.**

**Who may ascend the hill 'of the LORD?
Who may stand in his 'holy place?**

**He who has clean hands and a 'pure heart,
He will receive blessing from God his 'Savior.**

Refrain: Let the Lord enter; he is the King of glory.

**Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you 'ancient doors,
That the King of glory 'may come in.**

**Who is this King of 'glory?
The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in 'battle.**

**Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you 'ancient doors,
That the King of glory 'may come in.**

**Who is he, this King of 'glory?
The LORD Almighty - he is the King of 'glory.**

**Glory be to the Father and 'to the Son
And to the Holy 'Spirit,
As it was in the be'ginning,
Is now, and will be forever. 'Amen.**

Refrain: Let the Lord enter; he is the King of glory.

Second Lesson: Philippians 1:3-11

I thank my God every time I remember you. Every time I pray for all of you, I always pray with joy, because of your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. I am convinced of this very thing: that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. I am equally convinced that it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my

heart, for both in my chains and in my defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all share in this grace with me. Yes, God is my witness of how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And I pray that your love may still increase more and more in knowledge and every insight. This will result in your approval of the things that really matter, so that you will be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (EHV)

Verse of the Day: Alleluia. Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. All mankind will see God's salvation. Alleluia.

Gospel: Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar - while Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene - during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went into the whole region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Just as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: A voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord! Make his paths straight. Every valley will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be made low. The crooked will become straight, and the rough ways smooth. And everyone will see the salvation of God." (EHV)

The Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn #16 - *“On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry”*

On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Come, then, and listen, for he brings
Good news about the King of kings.

Then cleansed be ev’ry life from sin
And furnished for a guest within,
And let us all our hearts prepare
For Christ to come and enter there.

We hail you as our Savior, Lord,
Our refuge and our great reward.
Without your grace we waste away
Like flow’rs that wither and decay.

Stretch forth your hand, our health restore,
And lift us up to fall no more.
Oh, make your face on us to shine,
And fill the world with love divine.

All praise to you, eternal Son,
Whose advent has our freedom won,
Whom with the Father we adore
And Holy Spirit evermore.

The Sermon: Malachi 3:1-7b
 “Two Messengers”

The Day of the LORD is a **common** phrase in the Bible, which describes the day when the LORD will **return** to our world once again. On that day, Jesus will come and **judge** all people. He will throw the wicked **out** of His sight forever, and He will gather His **believers** to **Himself** in heaven. The Prophet Malachi asks, *“Who can **endure** the day when he comes? Who will remain **standing** when he appears?”* Those are very **valid** questions, especially when we realize that the LORD is **holy** and all **powerful**. Nothing **imperfect** can stand in His presence, which doesn’t leave much **hope** for **sinful** mankind.

But the great comfort found in the Bible is that God Himself has been at work to **prepare** us for that awesome day - to **purify** us from our sins, and to present us to Himself as **sinless** and **holy**. In fact, God is **still** working in our lives, so we **will** be able to **stand** before His throne completely **accepted**. In our text for today the Prophet **Malachi** tells us that the LORD would send **Two Messengers** to us - **John the Baptist** and **Jesus** - messengers who would **prepare** us for the Day of the LORD.

Malachi was the **last** of God's Old Testament prophets. He preached about **400 years** before the birth of Jesus. Through Malachi, God announced to the nation of **Israel** that the **Savior** whom He had promised was **coming**. But **before** He would **arrive**, someone **else** was coming too. Malachi wrote, *"Look! I am sending my messenger! He will prepare the way **before** me."* The Lord promised to send a **messenger** who would preach His **Word** to the people, and who would get them **ready** to receive the LORD **Himself**. We know from the **New Testament Scriptures** that this messenger is **John the Baptist**. Jesus Himself said about John, *"This is the one about whom it is written, 'Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will **prepare** your way before you.'"*

John was a very **important** character. Luke tells us in his Gospel, *"He (John) went into the whole region around the Jordan, **preaching** a baptism of **repentance** for the **forgiveness** of sins."* John preached the **harsh** message of God's **law**, in order to lead them to **repent** of their sins - to **turn away** from them. But John **also** preached the **comforting** message of the **Gospel**, so the people would know that God is **gracious**, and that He would **forgive** their sins through the waters of **baptism**. This was the **message** John had received from God. and it had great **power** - the power to work **repentance** in the people, and to **wash away** their sins. This is how he would **prepare** the people for the **arrival** of the LORD.

Today our God **continues** to use the message of John the Baptist to work in **our** hearts - to prepare **us** for the Day of the LORD. Even though John himself has been dead for nearly 2,000 years, his **message** of a baptism of **repentance** for the **forgiveness** of sins still lives on. In his sermon to the crowd of people who had gathered on the Day of **Pentecost**, Peter preached the very **same** message. He told the people, *"**Repent** and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the **forgiveness** of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* And of course this is the message that faithful pastors still proclaim **today**. God wants us to turn **away** from our sins - to get **rid** of all **bitterness**, **rage**, and **anger** - to renounce the **devil** and his **wicked** ways. It's **hard** for us **not** to love the **world** and the **things** of the world, but when we focus on our **baptism**, and the gift of the

Holy Spirit, we are constantly **reminded** that we have been **redeemed** by **Jesus**. Baptism **saves**. As Luther said, *“Baptism works **forgiveness** of sins, delivers from **death** and the **devil**, and gives eternal **salvation** to all who **believe** this, as the words and promises of God declare.”* Thank God for His **messenger** - John the Baptist - and for the gift of our **baptism**. May we continue to **drown** the Old Adam in us, along with its evil deeds and desires, by daily **contrition** and **repentance**, so the **New Man** in us can live in **righteousness** and **purity** - **prepared** for the Savior’s **arrival** on the Day of the LORD.

But the Prophet Malachi also gave his people the prophecy of a **second** messenger - a messenger who was even **more important** than John the Baptist. He would be the **Messenger** of the **Covenant**. Malachi prophesied: *“Then suddenly the **Lord**, whom you are seeking, will **come** to his temple! The **Messenger of the Covenant**, in whom you **delight**, will surely come, says the Lord of Armies.”* God’s Old Testament believers were anxiously **waiting** for the Lord to come. They knew that He would establish a **covenant** where God would **forgive** their sins, and remember them **no more**. Isn’t it **interesting** that after the Jews had **waited** for so many years for the Messiah to **come**, **suddenly** He was **there**. Jesus came to His **temple** - to His **people** - and He came as the **Messenger** of the **Covenant**. But the message of **Jesus** wasn’t only a **spoken** message, it was a message that He **fulfilled**. By His innocent **life** and sinless **death**, Jesus established a **new covenant** between God and all sinners - a covenant in which God **forgives** our sins for the sake of **Jesus**.

Jesus **continues** to come to His **people** - His **believing** followers. He comes to us in **baptism**, and brings us into God’s loving **family**. He comes to us in His **Word**, as He speaks a message of God’s **grace** and eternal **truth**. And He comes to us in His holy **supper**, bringing us His own **body** and **blood** - the **same** body that was offered as a **sacrifice**, and the same **blood** that was poured out for us on the **cross**. Through these Means of Grace, Jesus continually **renews** His covenant with us, and **guarantees** the blessing of **forgiveness**.

But Malachi continues, *“Who can endure **the day** when he comes? Who will remain **standing** when he appears? For he will be like a **refiner’s fire**, like **launderers bleach**! He will be seated like a **refiner** and a **purifier** of silver. He will **purify** the sons of Levi and **refine** them like gold and like silver.”* The **day** the prophet is talking about is the **Last Day** - the **second** coming of Jesus. **Fire** and **bleach** are both powerful cleansing agents. A refiner’s **fire** burns away all the impurities, and a launderer’s **bleach** attacks **dirt** and **stains**. Jesus is like **both** of

them. He's not **weak** He's not **lukewarm** - and He's not **tolerant** of sin. Jesus is 100% **pure**, and He purifies **us** from all our sins.

Malachi didn't **like** what he saw in the people of his day. The people brought **blemished** animals to the priest - animals that were **blind, lame, and sick** - trying to get by with as **little** as they **possibly could** - and the priests **offered** those animals as **sacrifices** to God. With those **imperfect** sacrifices, they were **robbing** God of the tithes and offerings which He had **demande**d, and which He **deserved**. Many of them had **divorced** their **godly** wives, and had married women who worshiped **false** gods. They constantly **complained** that God favored the **wicked**, and that He failed to **reward** the people whom **they** saw as **good**.

But are **we** any **better**? Just like the people of Malachi's day we can be half-hearted in our **worship** and **devotion** to the LORD. Our **love** can be **lukewarm**, and our desire to study His **Word** and to **serve** Him in humble **obedience** often falls **short**. We **say** things we **shouldn't** - we pollute our **minds** with sinful desires - and then we get upset with **God** because it seems like He's letting the **wicked** in the world get away with all their **godless** actions. Just like the people in **Malachi's** day, we fail to recognize that **we** are just as **wicked** as everyone else. If the LORD kept a record of our sins, **we** couldn't stand on the Last Day **either**. We need to be washed **clean** and **purified** of sin, and the **only** one who can **do** that is **Jesus**.

Malachi wrote, "*He will be seated like a **refiner** and a **purifier** of silver. He will **purify** the sons of Levi and **refine** them like gold and like silver.*" That's what Jesus does for **us**. Through His Word Jesus brings to the **surface** all of our **selfish** motives, and our **pride**. Then He **destroys** them. Jesus reveals the **inconsistencies** in our lives - the **exceptions** we want to make to **justify** our sinful words and actions, and He **destroys them too**. At the same time Jesus pours His loving **forgiveness** into our hearts. He **moulds** and **shapes** us to become more and more like **Him** in righteousness and holiness.

Whenever the LORD puts our faith to the **test**, and makes us go through fiery ordeals, it's not **pleasant** for us. But Jesus uses those tests to **refine** our faith, "*So that the proven **character** of your faith - which is more **valuable** than gold, which passes **away** even though it is tested by fire - may be found to result in **praise, glory, and honor** when Jesus Christ is revealed.*" The cleansing and refining work of Jesus has a wonderful **purpose**. It **prepares** us for the Day of the LORD. As God works through His Word, He firmly establishes our faith in **Jesus**, and He **guarantees** that He will **fulfill** this promise to us. He says, "*When you*

*walk through **fire**, you will **not** be **burned**, and the flame will **not** set you on fire. Because I am the **LORD** your God, the **Holy One of Israel**, your **Savior**.”*

God’s work in our lives is truly **beautiful**. Through the message of **John the Baptist** He **prepares** the way for the Lord to come to us. And through the message and work of **Jesus**, He **purifies** us from all **unrighteousness**, and **refines** us to be His people. When He returns again on the Day of the LORD, we will be able to **stand** before Him completely **accepted** - with hearts that are **grateful** for His **free gift** of **salvation**. Amen.

Prayers:

Dear Father, we thank You for **preparing** the kingdom of **heaven** for us through Jesus Christ Your dear Son, and for making us **members** of that kingdom through **faith** in Him. What **joy**, what **hope**, what **peace** is ours through Jesus. We know that for **His** sake You now **rule** us with Your **grace**, **forgiving** all our sins - and that You will give us **everlasting life** in heaven. We are no longer held in the bondage of **fear** and the power of **sin**, but trusting in Your **Son**, we are able to live victoriously **over** sin to the glory of Your name.

O Holy Spirit, **continue** Your work in us that we never lose our **hold** on everlasting life. Led by **You** instead of our sinful flesh, may we always seek first the kingdom of **heaven** - putting Your **Word**, and the **promise** of everlasting life it **brings**, ahead of everything else. Grant us Your **grace** so we will never fall away from our **faith**, fail to **worship** You, or tire of **servicing** You with loving obedience. Strengthen our ability to **resist** sin. Lead us continually into Your **Word**, giving us a desire to hear it **preached**, as well as a love for **reading** and **studying** it in our homes. Impress the **truths** of Your Word on our minds and hearts, and also give us a hunger and thirst for the **Lord’s Supper**. Enable us to receive it **frequently** for the **forgiveness** of our sins and the **strengthening** of our faith. Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer (sung to “Away in a Manger”)

Our Father in heaven all praise to Your name!
Your kingdom among us, Your will done the same
By mortals and angels. Come, Lord reign alone;
Oh, hear us and bless us from heaven’s high throne.

The bread that we yearn for provide us each day;
As we forgive others, our sins take away;

**In times of temptation, to lead us; be near.
From evil deliver Your children most dear.**

**For Yours is the kingdom, o'er all things You reign.
And Yours is the power; all things You maintain.
To You be the glory, resounding again
From all of creation, forever! Amen.**

Hymn #11 - "*Comfort, Comfort All My People*"

**"Comfort, comfort all my people;
Speak of peace," so says our God.
"Comfort those who sit in darkness,
Groaning from their sorrows' load.
Speak to all Jerusalem
Of the peace that waits for them;
Tell them that their sins I cover,
That their warfare now is over."**

**All their sins our God will pardon,
Blotting out each dark misdeed;
All that well deserve his anger
He no more will see or heed.
They have suffered many a day;
Now their griefs have passed away.
God will change their aching sadness
Into ever-springing gladness.**

**John the Baptist's voice is crying
In the desert far and near,
Calling people to repentance
For the kingdom now is here.
Oh, that warning cry obey!
Now prepare for God a way;
Let the valleys rise to meet him
And the hills bow down to greet him.**

**Straighten out the crooked highway;
Make the rougher places plain.
Let your hearts be true and humble,**

**Ready for his holy reign.
For the glory of the Lord
Now o'er earth is spread abroad,
And all flesh shall see the token
That his word is never broken.**

P: Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit! As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Blessing:

P: The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

C: Amen.

Hymn #14 - "*Arise, O Christian People*"

**Arise, O Christian people!
Prepare yourselves today.
Prepare to greet the Savior,
Who takes your sins away.
To us by grace alone
The truth and light was given;
The promised Lord from heaven
To all the world is shown.**

**Prepare the way before him;
Prepare for him the best.
Cast out what would offend him,
This great, this heav'nly guest.
Make straight, make plain the way:
The lowly valleys raising,
The heights of pride abasing,
His path all even lay.**

**The humble heart and lowly
God raises up on high;**

**Beneath his feet in terror
The haughty soul shall lie.
The heart sincere and right,
That heeds God's invitation
And makes true preparation -
It is the Lord's delight.**

**Prepare my heart, Lord Jesus;
Turn not from me aside,
And help me to receive you
This blessed Adventtide.
From stall and manger low
Come now to dwell within me;
I'll sing your praises gladly
And forth your glory show.**