

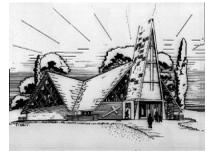


Free Evangelical Lutheran  
Synod in South Africa

## Sermon for Second Sunday of Advent (C)

The preaching of repentance  
prepares us for the Coming of the  
Lord!

St. John's Lutheran Parish



Shelly Beach

### The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Luke 3, 1–14:

**ESV** 1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituræa and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,

- 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.
- 3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
- 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
- 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways,
- 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."
- 7 He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptised by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
- 8 Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.
- 9 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."
- 10 And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?"
- 11 And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."
- 12 Tax collectors also came to be baptised and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"
- 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do."
- 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

• *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, sharpen our conscience, wake us up, renew us, prepare us for Your Salvation comes to us! Amen.*

• **Dear Citizens of God's Jerusalem!**

• The Forerunner of Christ appeared! The Word of God came to him, in the desert! The Word of God awakes and activates him! He did not come on his own accord. This is not a “once upon a time story” ... It happened in history, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, etc. Historical data is given here! We know the exact dates of Tiberius Cæsar: He reigned from the 18 September 14 AD- 16 March 37 AD. That means this happened in the year 29 AD! That Herod was a tetrarch of Galilee at that time is also confirmed by archæology. It's real, true, historical! It is history: The Forerunner of Christ was John the Baptist! He came from the wilderness. He was isolated, in the desert, all by himself. He was paid by nobody. No connections to any group of people.

• An instrument of God. A voice crying out in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord! He was saying what needed to be said. He called a spade “spade” and sin “sin”. Extreme words were part of his vocabulary like “you brood of vipers” - which means “you bunch of demons”- these he was throwing at people who came to be baptised. Especially the elite came under his harsh words, those who considered themselves to be the pious ones, the rich in spirit and wisdom!

• No political correctness had any say in his sermon. No treading lightly because of the context, oh the context, the context- no, none of that. He gave it to them straight. Take it or burn under God's wrath! He would not run after people. He would not beg them to listen to him. Whœver refused to listen to him or to be baptised, well, they cursed themselves, they cut themselves off from the source of forgiveness of sins. And even those who came to him, who were baptised, yet only because it was the “in thing” to do, would not escape the fire of God's wrath!

• Here was *the* opportunity which God had prepared for the Israëlites to be cleansed, to be prepared for the coming of their Messiah who would baptise them with the Holy Spirit! Jesus would make them true citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. Their belonging to Israël, according to the flesh, their being natural descendants of Abraham, did not and does not include them in God's kingdom automatically. They also needed to repent and be baptised! And many did come, in fact the whole of Israël came to be baptised, Luke informs us, only the Pharisees and Scribes refused [Lk 7,30]!! They refused to repent!

• Now, the time of John the Baptist is long gone, but he is still preaching to us today! Repentance is not something that we as Christians do once and then we are sort of over it, as if we could leave it behind, as if we could go to a next higher stage, here on earth. No.

As long as my old Adam is still attached to me I am accountable for his being evil. And my mind needs to be rewired so to speak. I need to see my Self in the mirror of God's commandments. The one side of the truth. This is definitely no good news for my Self. It stands condemned by God's demands!

• We can only face this truth, without falling into terrible despair, when we hear and trust in the other side of the Truth, the marvellous good news, namely that Christ was born for us and went the way of suffering and death for us. He is our ultimate Salvation. A Salvation that came for us and still comes to us and will finally come to complete the new Birth He has given us. Therefore, based on this whole truth, our whole life as Christians should be marked by continuous repentance. Repentance in the sense of denying our old evil Self and confirming the new Birth in water and the Spirit. This needs to continue life long.

• What sets the reminding into action? What activates our mind to make us realise again and again who we are in Christ, the full picture? The Word of God! It activates this process of remembrance! We need to hear the Truth of God's Word, the Law and the Gospel over and over and over again, so that our old mind, which is lagging far behind God's acts of Grace, is rewired, is physically re-minded. In this way it will become steadfast. We will get convinced more and more as we are indoctrinated, daily, by the life-saving Truth of God's Word!

• This won't be necessary after we have received our new Bodies. Until our physical death or the coming of the Last Day, whichever comes first, we need to hear and learn God's Word regularly. Then we will be separated from all evil completely. Now, as we continue to life in this world, we are still surrounded by many deceptive influences!

• The world also has its dogmas and confessions, the foundation being that there is something good in everyone! Hope, so goes the teaching, lies on the inside of every person. It is all a matter of balance. Well, this humanistic enthusiasm is completely demolished by the Forerunner of Christ! "You brood of vipers" he called the crowds coming to be baptised! Paul would later on teach in exceptional clarity, that there is nothing good in me, that is in my flesh.

• These kinds of twisted truths offering false hopes can easily deceive our minds to place our hope on things inside of us, whilst the Good of Christ comes in from the outside of ourselves which makes it objectively true and good, something we can cling to, something which we did not do to ourselves, no self salvation, but a gift that is genuinely handed to us by another person in the name of our Lord!

• This gifted Word changes our actions. This will empower us to do what is right in a world which is in a state of revolution against God and His commandments as it pretends to be capable of saving the world by it's own means!

• It is only those who trust in Christ, those who rely on Him, those who live out of their Baptism that will have the insight and conviction, the desire to do the Will of God. Christians want to follow the commandments of their Lord. They realise that the Law of God is good, even spiritual! They love the Law of God. They hunger for righteousness! Therefore, we should start and continue to do God's Will. We cannot expect the world to do the will of God.

• Therefore, trusting in Christ we don't need to steal any more, not even do any tax evasions! Over-charging is out! No bribery. Bribery is a contagious sin. Trusting in Christ, for us, it is out of the question! Christ will provide what we need. Are you going to loose projects and opportunities because our society is infested with bribery- yes, for sure. Trusting in Christ, we do without it.

• Trusting in Christ, we look with compassion on our neighbours, and we help them, which is not only about sharing food and clothing, but, what most need today, is time to listen to them. They can be poor or rich.

• As those with whom Christ has established a new relationship, we are freed to serve our neighbours. As we work in our vocations we don't work to create monuments of ourselves on this earth- an earth which is perishing. Rather, we use the gifts God has given us for the benefit of others. We can begin to put others higher than ourselves!

• Of course, doing this is not easy. The greatest resistance to simply do this comes from within our own Self, our private demon, so to speak. This is where God jumps into action and speaks His two-sided Truth to us and re-minds us of His salvation for us. He even lets those who have been taught the main articles of faith, and confessed them, taste of His Salvation for the forgiveness of sins. Through these God will ultimately take us to His place of abundance, an abundance of Truth, Love and everlasting Joy!

• Praise be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

• *"He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with (you) all." **Amen.** [<sup>ESV</sup>Rev 22,20-21]*