

## Notes for Next Sunday

Second Sunday in Advent

### The Point of this Week's Readings

These readings are all about being ready to receive Jesus by living lives that reflect a repentant heart.

Old Testament (Malachi 3:1-7). Malachi is foretelling the coming of John the Baptist. John will preach repentance to make way for the coming of Jesus. The Israelites had long been unfaithful to God as they had continually worshiped idols. BUT, God continued to be faithful and would send Jesus to save the world from their sins. At the end of this reading there is an invitation to return to God.

Epistle (Philippians 1:2-11). Paul gives thanks for the Philippians and prays for them. He elevates them to being his partners in sharing the Gospel. But as new Christians Paul tells them that they need to continue to grow in their faith. This will make them more effective associates and also prepare them for the Day of the Lord.

Gospel (Luke 1-14). This is the story of John the Baptist's ministry to prepare the way for Jesus. Like predicted in Malachi 3, he comes preaching repentance at the Jordan River out in the desert. He calls out the religious leaders of his day labeling them a "brood of vipers." He challenges them to prove that they are truly repentant by their behavior. John also points to Jesus and His even more powerful ministry.

*For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.*

OLD TESTAMENT- Malachi 3:1-7

**"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. <sup>2</sup> But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. <sup>3</sup> He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, <sup>4</sup> and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years. <sup>5</sup> "So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me," says the LORD Almighty. <sup>6</sup> "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. <sup>7</sup> Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty.**

To understand the situation of that day you need to go back to 2:17. Israel's sins had wearied God. The leaders had misled the people by what they taught and also by their own actions. It got so that people were saying "Where is the God of justice?"

The word "behold" means "Pay attention or 'now hear this.'" Now God will send a messenger. The messenger is John the Baptist who will prepare the way for Jesus (v. 1).



The second part of verse 1 tells of Jesus coming. This will be a time when Jesus' Word will reveal the hearts of many (Luke 2:35). This will be a time of judgment for those who have been teaching their own doctrines

There are two questions in verse 2. The first one asks "who can endure?" Endure means to "measure up." The second asks "who can stand?" "To stand" means to "remain in an upright position." Without faith in Christ the answer is a resounding "no" to both questions. Only those who repent and believe in Christ and His Word will survive.

Fire and soap clean and make purer (vv. 2-3). The aim is the destruction of our sinful nature and the raising to life of a new creature by grace. One way God does this is when we remember our baptism and live in daily repentance.

In verse 3 the religious leaders are addressed. Before the Levites could serve God at His altar they needed to be made pure of their sins.

In verse 6 God reminds Israel that even though they have forsaken Him, He remains faithful to His covenant of grace. If the Lord is to come for Israel's redemption, she must repent.

#### Epistle - Philippians 1:2-11

**<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup>I thank my God every time I remember you. <sup>4</sup>In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup>because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup>being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. <sup>7</sup>It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. <sup>8</sup>God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup>And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, <sup>10</sup>so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup>filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ-to the glory and praise of God.**

*1:5 your partnership in the gospel.* The basis of Paul's prayerful thanksgiving is not only their reception of the gospel but also their active support of his ministry (see 4:15). (CSB)

*1:6 being confident.* The apostle certainly is not advocating overconfidence here. Nor is he implying that once a person has been brought to faith he cannot lose the blessings God has given. In the very next chapter he urges believers to use diligently the spiritual-weapons and powers the Lord has given them to fight against sin and temptation and to grow in faith. (PBC)

*1:7 since I have you in my heart.* The heart is the place of affection and deep thought. Paul has the Philippian Christians continually in mind with deep affection. (TLSB)

*1:9-11* Paul prays for the cause of the salvation (knowledge, discernment, through Jesus Christ) and the effect of salvation (love abounding, approving what is excellent, blameless at Judgment Day). Every other Christian doctrine can be placed under one these two headings. (TLSB)

GOSPEL - Luke 3:1-14

**In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar-when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and**

**Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene-<sup>2</sup> during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.<sup>3</sup> He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.<sup>4</sup> As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.<sup>5</sup> Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth.<sup>6</sup> And all mankind will see God's salvation.'"<sup>7</sup> John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?<sup>8</sup> Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.<sup>9</sup> The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."<sup>10</sup> "What should we do then?" the crowd asked.<sup>11</sup> John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same."<sup>12</sup> Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"<sup>13</sup> "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.<sup>14</sup> Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't, accuse people falsely-be content with your pay."**

In this gospel John the Baptist begins his ministry preaching repentance. His unique dress and his message are startling and provide a wake-up call for the people at that time. Isaiah 40:3-5 is quoted in verses 4-6.

In verses 7-9 John comes out swinging. He starts with the religious leaders by calling them a "brood of vipers." A "brood" is a group of, in this case, baby snakes. Another name for them was "Children of Satan. Literally: "offspring of snakes." In verse 8 John takes away another crutch by telling them that having Abraham as their father" does not give them a free pass for their unbelief.

Also in verse 8 John uses the "out of these stones God can raise up children of Abraham." Gentiles were considered stones, and John is saying that God can create Jews out of Gentiles by means of John's baptism of repentance to the forgiveness of sins.

When John says "the ax is already at the root" (v. 9), he is warning them of the coming judgment. The first judgment would come in 70 AD. when Jerusalem would be destroyed and the second judgment. As we remember Christ's coming at Christmas we also need to prepare for His coming at the end of time.

More than simply feeling sorrow and remorse, the truly penitent seek a godly alternative to sinful living. (v.10). In verses 11-14 John gives all the people examples of actions they can take to show repentance.