

## Second Sunday in Advent

OLD TESTAMENT – Malachi 3:1-7

**“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. 2 But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. 3 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD. 4 Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. 5 “Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.**

**3:1** *behold* - hane – Lo, behold. Pay attention or “now hear this.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

The people are tired. The preacher, the prophet, is tired. They say: “Wait. Wait again, etc. No matter how much we serve the Lord, yet the Gentiles have it better than we.” But He says: “Have confidence. Behold, your salvation is now at the door and that kingdom will be changed. Your murmurings and the complaints of the prophets will cease, who believe that they are preaching in vain. The righteous will be separated from the wicked, and the wicked will no longer be more powerful, more fortunate.” But He is saying all this in a spiritual sense and especially in regard to His teaching and accomplishment. Where the pure Gospel is, there Christ rules. There are excluded the heretics, the antichrists, the wicked, the hypocrites, those who remain in sin and death. In the old synagog there were more wicked teachers than good ones. Two men who teach contrary doctrines cannot stay at the same time. The people want one true and steadfast teacher whom they can trust. Here the Lord promises one who would give his hearers a sound and secure mind in all their tribulations. He says, “I will send you the genuine Malachi, that is, a messenger, who is John the Baptist.” (Luther)

*my messenger.* The Hebrew for these words is *mal’aki*; it is normally used of a priest or prophet (see Hag 1:13 and note). This is fulfilled in John the Baptist (see Mt 11:10; Mk 1:2; Lk 1:76). (CSB)

Not Malachi, but a promise that the Lord would send an extraordinary messenger; this was fulfilled in John the Baptist. Luth: “[The Lord] says, ‘I will send you the genuine Malachi, that is, a messenger, who is John the Baptist’ ” (AE 18:408). (TLSB)

This was fulfilled with the coming of John the Baptist. .” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

Mark 1:2-3 “It is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”

*he will prepare the way.* When the Lord comes, it will be to purify (v. 3) and judge (v. 5), but he will mercifully send one before him to prepare his people. (CSB)

John prepared the way for Christ by “proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk 1:4). (TLSB)

These are Christ’s words, even though He Himself quotes them differently. A prince who is about to enter a city sends messengers ahead to prepare for him whatever is necessary as well as others to clear a path for him lest he be hindered by thronging people. ܩܘܪܝܢܐ means to empty, to make room, or even to provide a reputation. John, therefore, will see to it that the appearance of the way would look beautiful and unencumbered. After all, there are many things which hinder the “way,” that is, the work of the Lord. Those things must be removed, especially human reason, self-love, one’s own wisdom, one’s own righteousness, etc. That preparing, then, is to make humble and to arrange things so as to allow God to work in one. You see, the way of the Lord is where He Himself walks. The prophet mentions nothing about our ways except that we should abstain from them. After all, our works lie in His way, so that Christ cannot work or enter. John told all the Jews and those doing very fine works “Repent!” as if he were speaking to sinners. He is saying: “Let the Lord enter. He Himself will justify you and will do the will of the Lord. Neither you nor your works will do this.” This is what it means to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, etc. Those who believe, then, are those who are prepared to meet the Lord and to receive Him. In them He is able to work, that is, in those who have been brought back to a knowledge of their sins. (Luther)

God always wants his people to be ready for him so that they will get the full benefit of what he brings with him. (CSB)

*suddenly come* – He will come suddenly, unexpectedly, immediately after His messenger. He says in John 1:26–30: “Among you stands One whom you do not know ... even He who ranks before me.” That is, He was ordained to preach and to save. (Luther)

*the Lord whom you are seek*. Jesus is the God of justice whom the people desired (2:17). (TLSB)

“You seek Him to free you from the wicked, to be both your Priest and your protecting King, the Messenger of the covenant, that is, the Messenger of the agreement and the glorious King. Unlike David, He will not rule physically but in the preaching of the Word. He is the Messenger, the Minister of the living Word.” The covenant is the promises of God, which all point to Christ, even the temporal promises. The covenant required death. Therefore, He is here identified not only as God but also as the Man who suffered, died, and even now rules. The distribution of the [inheritance of the] covenant is eternal life. (Luther)

*coming*. John and Jesus were born approximately 400 years after the time of Malachi. (TLSB)

*messenger of the covenant*. The Messiah, who as the Lord’s representative will confirm and establish the covenant. (CSB)

This is an even more distinguished Messenger, our Lord Jesus Christ, who brought the new covenant in His blood. (TLSB)

**3:2** *who can endure* - kool – To be able to withstand, to be able to bear or stand up under. To measure up. .” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

When the God of justice appears, all will be found guilty (Rm 3:23). (TLSB)

Literally stated says, “Who can take this in?” Who can comprehend what is going to happen, the process that must be completed before God’s children stand pure and holy before His throne to begin the eternal celebrations? (PBC)

*day of his coming.* The day of the Lord. Malachi announces the Lord’s coming to complete God’s work in history, especially the work he outlines in the rest of his book. His word is fulfilled in the accomplishments of the Messiah. (CSB)

In Hebrew this reads: “Who will regulate or control the day, etc.?” or, “Who will provide?” It is as if he were saying: “Remain in your fear, then. Stay humble. Let that Messenger prepare you. You see, He will not come in royal garb, as the kings of the world do. He will come before any man will be able to foresee when and how He will come. He will fulfill all things, and no one will know that He is the Christ.” With this the prophet reveals the very great humiliation of the Word and of the Son of God. Still today His coming is like this, unexpected. (Luther)

*Who can stand ... ?* Those who desire the Lord’s coming must know that clean hands and a pure heart are required (cf. Ps 24:3–4; Isa 33:14–15). (CSB)

awmad – To be able to remain in an upright position.

With this the prophet is speaking about the stumbling block which is in Christ. “He will appear to be of such lowly character that, unless you will have listened to the voice of that previous messenger and will have followed his pointing finger, none of you is going to receive Him. None of you will believe in Him. Rather you are going to say, ‘Ah, here is a king who has no place to lay his head, who is crucified and dies.’” Because of this, Christ Himself says (Matt. 11:6): “Blessed is he who takes no offense at Me,” that is, “Blessed is the man who does not measure Me according to his reason.” Therefore His messenger also is sent ahead so that the light of reason may be extinguished and the carpenter’s Son may be recognized as the Messiah. Many who were looking were not seeing, for who will stand firm in the faith? (Luther)

*refiner’s fire.* Fire was used to remove impurities from metals. Everlasting punishment is compared to a lake of fire (Rv 20:14) (TLSB)

Blazing, or purifying. That is, “He will condemn all your works and enthusiasms. All your attitudes will have to be mortified, just as a fire melts and purifies silver and separates it from all impurities.” בְּרִית means a sharp cleaning agent or soap that washes great stains out of garments. This is how Christ will condemn all things and demand only spiritual qualities. In spite of his scales, Satan has a very difficult time enduring this. The Jews kept puffing themselves up with their own righteousness. From this it is very difficult to pull them away to follow Christ. The kingdom of Christ is a mystical smelting furnace that purges out the impurity of the old Adam. Here the prophet seems to be speaking about the white linen cloaks which eastern people wore most commonly. These are washed with soap. Christ is not merely the Purifier but also the purifying Agent. He is not only the Blacksmith but also the Fire; not only the Cleaner but also the Soap. He does not sit indolently at the right hand of His Father. Rather He is always working among us vitally, effectively, and uninterruptedly as He is spread abroad over His mystical body, as fire is applied to metal. So He is elsewhere called Salvation, and not just Savior. That is, He is Salvation itself and the Laboratory of salvation. This is what Christians sense. They have less affection for wealth; they are less afraid of death; they disregard everything secular. The power to do this is the “fire” and the “soap.” (Luther)

Isaiah 1:25 “I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities.”

*fullers' soap.* White clothes signified purity (cf. Mk 9:3; Rev 3:5). (CSB)

A fuller used strong soap made of lye to clean wool and make it white. Luther: “Christ is not merely the Purifier but also the purifying Agent. He is not only the Blacksmith but also the Fire; not only the Cleaner but also the Soap” (AE 18:410). (TLSB)

His aim is the destruction of our sinful nature, and the raising of life to a new nature by grace. His messianic mission is to purify and cleanse. Incidentally, if you have ever had your mouth washed out with soap, you know it is strong medicine. .” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

The picture of a launderer is also used, one who cleans by rubbing and kneading and beating to make cloth soft and clean and pliable. This would be the Old-Rubbed-Washboard-School-Of-Hard-Knocks in which God makes His children bed easily and quickly to His will. (PBC)

Psalm 24:3-4 “Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.”

**3:3** *he will sit* – The “seat” has the force of teaching and of judgment. This, then, is a strange kingdom, established not on external armor but on the cleansing of people, on the renewing of souls which are then brought back to salvation and eternal life. To be sure, this is a magnificent situation. It is, however, a spiritual kingdom. Outwardly it offends all flesh. (Luther)

*as a refiner* - tsawraf – To melt or purge away any impurities and make something much stronger.

One who puts silver through fire until all the impurities are burned away. (TLSB)

In Ps. 12:6 we have this: “The promises of the Lord are promises that are pure, [silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times].” To be sure, the Word of God is completely pure in itself, but it is purified in us daily because it purifies us. Scripture is a very bright light, but to a wicked man it is pure darkness. God is very well known, but if you don’t know Him, that is your fault. These words are light. Christ is the Purifier; He is Righteousness, Redemption, Life, etc. I say, these words are light which we never look at enough and which becomes clearer every day. The matter lies not in the sound of the words but in the inmost depths of the heart. The sun is darkness to the blind. That is not the fault of the sun but of blind or closed eyes. (Luther)

This messenger will “sit” at task to melt down our pretensions and reform us in a whole new mold. Especially will he “cleanse the sons of Levi,” pointing to the priesthood of all believers in Christ, but especially indicating the necessity of God’s ministers being pure by grace. The purpose is so that “they will present a righteous offering to the Lord.” Proper worship begins with “divine service,” in which God first “serves” His people by imparting His righteousness through the means of grace. Only then can God’s people serve Him in righteousness. .” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

*purify the sons of Levi.* Those who are supposed to be “messengers” of the Lord and who serve at the altar will be purged of their sins and unfaithfulness—such as the Lord has rebuked in 1:6–2:9. (CSB)

A prophecy referring to Christians, the “royal priesthood” (1Pt 2:9) who will replace the Levitical priesthood. (TLSB)

“He will purify, elevate, cleanse them. He will remove the dross of false doctrine to reveal the light of divine truth through the Word by which they themselves will be led. The kingdom of Christ is the exercise of Word and faith because of the perpetual harm of the wicked. Whoever, therefore, wishes to become a Christian must give himself over to being purified. (Luther)

Before the Levites could serve God at his altar they needed to be made pure of their sins. Before we can serve the Lord he needs to forgive us our sins and make us acceptable in his sight.

*Offerings in righteousness* – A sacrifice in righteousness is a sacrifice of the new covenant. After all, what need would there have been to promise sacrifices that they were already making? The things they were doing then, however, were all impure because impure priests were making the sacrifices. Moreover, the sacrifices of Christians are pure and right, because they themselves are pure and right, as we read in Ps. 132:9: “Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness, etc.” In this way, then, the prophet describes first the justification of the person, and then the righteous work. Our sacrifice is the mortification of the flesh, signified by the tearing away and destruction of that old flesh. But by the fire of the Spirit and of love a fragrance very sweet to the Lord is kindled. (Luther)

In contrast to the disgraceful sacrifices of the priests in Malachi’s day, God will create a people who are genuinely righteous in faith and who offer Him spiritual sacrifices (Rm 12:1; 1Pt 2:5). “This passage clearly requires the sacrifices of the righteous, and so does not favor the opinion about the outward act (*opus operatum*). But the sacrifices of the sons of Levi, that is, of those teaching in the New Testament, are the preaching of the Gospel and the good fruit of preaching” (Ap XXIV 34). (TLSB)

**3:4** *be acceptable*. See 1:8 and note. (CSB)

The offerings of God’s NT priests will fulfill His purpose in instituting the OT sacrifices (cf Ps 51:17). (TLSB)

When the persons are pleasant and pleasing, their sacrifices, too, are pleasant and pleasing. (Luther)

We can’t do a thing on our own. God must act first and make us acceptable. .” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

Revelation 3:5 “He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.”

*former years*. Probably the time of Moses and Phinehas. (CSB)

That is, as in the days before the Law had been given. You see, all this has been said in reproach of the Law. After all, hypocrites started when the Law was given. Before the Law, sacrifices were sanctioned through faith. But the same faith, the same Spirit, the same grace which existed in the days before the Law will be in the kingdom of Christ. Faith makes voluntary offerings, while the Law compels them against the will. (Luther)

**3:5** When he comes, the Lord will both purify the Levites (vv. 3–4) and judge the people. (CSB)

*I will draw near to you for judgment* – After the prophet has described how it will be with the saints in the kingdom of Christ, he now reveals what will become of the wicked, who will be separated<sup>5</sup> from the righteous. Purity of doctrine will remain with the righteous. Those who are befouled with manifest wickedness will not be tolerated in that new kingdom. He says: “I will come through the Word for judgment. I will excommunicate, condemn, cut off.” (Luther)

Final judgment, when God will gather all nations before His glorious throne (Mt 25:32; Rm 14:10). (TLSB)

*swear falsely against* – “one who blames, censures. I will not leave anything hidden. Poisoners and evildoers abuse the Word of God. Therefore they will be excluded.” (Luther)

One of several biblical catalogs of sins to which the Lord of hosts will testify on the Day of Judgment (Mk 7:21–22; 1Co 6:9–10; Rv 21:8). (TLSB)

*who oppress* – that is, who rob them. (Luther)

He is the God of the underdog championing the cause of the defenseless. He calls the wicked to justice because they do not fear him; and it is this very lack of fear that makes them bold to perpetuate their lies and their evil deeds. (PBC)

*sorcerers*. Common in the ancient Near East (see Ex 7:11; Dt 18:10). (CSB)

**2:17–3:5** The people in Malachi’s day ask, “Where is the God of justice?” (cf 2Pt 3:4). The Lord makes it very clear that the Day of Judgment is coming. He wants all people to be prepared for that day. That’s why He sent the Messenger of the new covenant, Jesus Christ, to suffer and die for the sins of the world. Christ will come again, “not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him” (Heb 9:28). • Blessed Lord and Savior, help me to wait and pray for Your reappearing with confidence and hope. Amen. (TLSB)

*Robbing God*

**6 “For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. 7 From 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 hosts. But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ 8 Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. 10 Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. 11 I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts. 12 Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts. 13 “Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ 14 You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? 15 And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.’”**

**3:6** *do not change*. See Jas 1:17. Contrary to what many in Malachi’s day were thinking, God remains faithful to his covenant. (CSB)

This fifth part of Malachi begins with the Lord's assertion that He will never change. He continues to condemn sin, but His mercy also endures forever. (TLSB)

"I do not lie. I do not revoke the promises I have made through so many prophets. So, have no doubt! Your unworthiness will not hold back My truth. I have promised freely. I will redeem those promises freely. It is for this that I brought you back out of captivity, to fulfill My promises. The entire matter, therefore, must be credited to divine goodness and not to any<sup>6</sup> merits of any men, for you have always sinned against Me." That He says "From the days of your fathers" (v. 7) corresponds to that earlier statement (Mal. 2:17): "Everyone who does evil is a good man, etc." He turns the blame back onto them. It is mercy, then, that they have not been destroyed. (Luther)

Even though God comes in judgment of His people He does not destroy them or reject them. He remains faithful to His covenant of grace. ." (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

*children of Jacob* – In 1:2, the Lord assured Jacob's offspring of His love, which remains constant. (TLSB)

*not consumed*. In contrast to Edom (1:3–5) and in spite of Israel's history of unfaithfulness. (CSB)

The Lord refrained from doing what He had every right to do. (TLSB)

Literally, "and ye, the Sons of Jacob, ye are not yet consumed," that is, the Lord will keep the true spiritual Israel safe while He sends His judgment upon the wicked in their midst. Even so the Church of Christ in the New Testament is preserved in the midst of hypocrisy and deceit, and the wicked will finally be destroyed. (Kretzmann)

**3:7** *turn aside* – Hbr *shub*, "to turn off a path, to the right or left." God's people walked in directions contrary to His intended course. (TLSB)

*Return ... and I will return*. If the Lord is to come for Israel's redemption, she must repent. (CSB)

A play on the Hbr term *shub*, "to turn, turn around, return"; often translated "repent." (TLSB)

These words seem to support the free will of man. They are, however, words of the Law, upon which the ability to obey does not immediately follow. After all, He has already said that they had never kept the Law, even if they were eager to keep it. To be sure, God is a good Lawgiver, but we are lazy doers of it. The Law tells us what we should do. He says, "Return to obey Me, and I will return to you to bless you. I will be your kind Father of mercies." (Luther)

They did not realize that the real service of Jehovah must be a growth from within, from a heart which lives in His fear. Therefore the prophet asks, in turn, in order to arouse them to a consciousness of the true meaning of worship. (Kretzmann)

## EPISTLE – Philippians 1:2-11

### *Greeting*

**1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**1:1–2** As in all his letters, Paul follows the conventional letter format of his day, with its three elements: (1) identification of the sender, (2) identification of the recipients, (3) greeting. (CSB)

**1:1** Paul calls himself a servant and names Timothy as a fellow-servant, the word which he uses retaining, to some degree, the meaning of bond-servant. He considers himself and his young helper as the property of the heavenly Master, whose one aim must be to carry out the Lord's will and work. (Kretzmann)

The Christians of the city owed much to him, and he was about to visit them again. Timothy had his teacher's, his spiritual father's, mind and character, and his memory was a pleasant one among the Philippians, who had learned to love him. (Kretzmann)

*servants.* See Ro 1:1; Tit 1:1; Phm 1. In Paul's case, this designation brings out an essential aspect of the more usual identification of himself as "apostle." (CSB)

Or, "slaves." Used in the NT in a positive and negative sense. According to our fallen human nature, we are described as "slaves" of sin; i.e., we have denied God in order to join the enemy. As such traitors, we have no rights, nor do we possess the ability to free ourselves (Jn 8:34; Rm 6:20). As regenerate believers with souls inspired by the Holy Spirit, we are servants in the sense of being duty bound to carry out the will of our Master (Mt 10:24–25; 1Pt 2:16). (TLSB)

*saints.* A designation, not of individual moral purity, but of spiritual union with Christ, as the following "in Christ Jesus" shows (see Ro 1:7; 1Co 1:2 and notes). (CSB)

To all the saints in Christ Jesus that were in Philippi Paul addressed his letter. He used the word which denotes their separation from the world and their consecration to God. The Christians belong to God, are saints, made saints in Christ Jesus, inasmuch as they are sanctified in Christ and are in Holy Communion with Christ. Through Christ they are united with God, in life and covenant. (Kretzmann)

This is a regular NT designation for Christians, a tribute not to their lofty level of sanctification but to Christ Jesus who gives them his righteousness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)

*Philippi.* The letter was addressed to the congregation at Philippi. All the Philippian Christians were, in the eyes of Paul, saints. He disregards the fact that there are also hypocrites in the external assembly. For the sake of charity he considers them all Christians, or saints. (Kretzmann)

*overseers and deacons.*† The only place in Paul's writings where church officers as a group are singled out as recipients of a letter. Probably they had been instrumental in sending the financial gift to Paul. (CSB)

The overseer, bishop, is a term Paul sometimes interchanges with elder and pastor. Deacons tended to the more common chores and duties of the congregation. Paul's singling out of these church leaders is unique to this letter, quite possibly a way to recognize their part in gathering the gift they had sent to Paul. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)

He also mentions expressly the bishops and deacons of the congregation, not as a hierarchy separate from the congregation, but as a part of the congregation. As early as the middle of the first century, therefore, the Christians recognized special ministers of the Word. (Kretzmann)

*overseers.* The bishops were those members of the presbytery that were engaged in the ministry of the Word, in the capacity of preachers. (Kretzmann)



*deacons*. The deacons were also members of the presbytery of the congregation, but were more properly engaged in the external business of the congregation, in the care of the poor, etc. The congregation at Philippi had good bishops and deacons, whom Paul mentions with loving respect. (Kretzmann)

**1:2** The opening greeting is not merely a matter of polite custom but is given a distinctively Christian tone and content. (CSB)

*grace and peace* – Paul Christianizes the salutation commonly used at that time to begin letter. Grace always denotes the undeserved goodness of God. Peace denotes the condition of those who are reconciled to God. The order of the two is significant, especially in this letter and in the verse following. First there must be grace; then peace follows.

His salutation is that of most of his letters: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christians have received, and Paul wishes that they may always possess, grace in and through Christ, given by the Father, in the new birth and life, the chief blessing of all times. Father and Son are here coordinated as in many other passages. Christ is the Mediator that gained salvation by His vicarious sacrifice, thus establishing the right relation between God and man, with the gift of grace and peace, Rom. 5, 1. (Kretzmann)

**1:1–2** Paul introduces his Letter to the Christians in Philippi with descriptions of who they are and what that will mean in their lives. As a servant of Christ Jesus, Paul takes great pains to be faithful to the ministry entrusted to him. Paul means to encourage every reader by describing us as saints and by announcing that the words of the Letter to follow, which are inspired by the Holy Spirit, will bring grace and peace to us. • Thank You, God, for making us Your saints and for providing Your Word of grace and peace to sustain us. Amen. (TLSB)

### *Thanksgiving and Prayer*

**3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. 7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace,[d] both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 8 For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.**

**1:3–4** *I thank my God ... prayers for ... you ... with joy.* Prayers of joyful thanksgiving for his readers' response to the gospel are a hallmark of the opening sentences of Paul's letters (see Ro 1:8; 1Co 1:4; Col 1:3; 1Th 1:2; 2Th 1:3; 2Ti 1:3; Phm 4). (CSB)

The Apostle begins with thanksgiving and praise, and that is the keynote for the whole epistle. What he thanks God for is given later in verse 5. Paul here would indicate the attitude of the Philippians, not to himself, but to God. (Stoekhardt)

The are three modifiers, "always" (pantote), "in all my remembrance of," and "for you all" (huper humoon). The Apostle would emphasize the "all," which was already mentioned in the first verse. The

Apostle finds he has reason to rejoice about all the Christians at Philippi, since all are in the faith. All Christians are in need to be remembered in the supplication and thanksgiving of their pastor. These Christians at Philippi even came in for special consideration, as they were the first fruits of the Gospel ministry in Europe. Therefore the Apostle prays and gives thanks with joy. (Stoekhardt)

**1:3** *I thank my God* – The faith and support of the Philippians encourage Paul. (TLSB)

Paul sees the supreme Giver behind their gifts and he gives thanks accordingly. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)

*all my remembrance of you* – Like a good Christian leader Paul keeps the people to whom he ministers always in mind. In the case of the Philippians, these memories are very good. This was a good congregation.

Paul had been mistreated in Philippi, yet he remembered the congregation with joy. (LifeLight)

Whenever he thought about the Philippians and his eventful ministry among them, the apostle must have remembered the special way in which the Lord had called him to bring the gospel to that area of the world: the night vision and the urgent call, “Come over into Macedonia and help us.” He must have remembered the first Christian worship service on the European continent, his meeting with a little group of Jewish women who met along the riverbank on the Sabbath day. He must have remembered Lydia, one of that original group of women, who had enthusiastically accepted the gospel, then immediately opened her home as a temporary lodging place for the missionaries and a headquarter for the infant church. (PBC)

Whenever he remembered the Philippians, Paul must have remembered his imprisonment in Philippi, the miraculous midnight deliverance the Lord had granted to Silas and to him and the subsequent conversion of the jailer and his family. (PBC)

**1:4** *every prayer of mine* – Notice thanksgiving is a natural part of all our prayers. Paul thanks God even as he makes requests before His throne. (LifeLight)

*with joy* – The Philippians have given him joy by joining together with him in the Gospel. (TLSB)

Kara recurs five times in this epistle, and forms of the verb Kairo “rejoice,” occur 11 times. The entire letter radiates with joy and happiness, despite Paul’s adverse circumstances. Paul’s is not always an emotional joy, but one that summons the varied situations and conditions of life on earth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)

**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)

koinonia also used as communion or fellowship. This is more than good times and fun. It relates to the communion of saints that we confess in the Creed – a specific, active union “in the Gospel,” the result of the abiding presence of God’s Spirit within and among us.

koinonia – A partnership, that involves participation. They are not just spectators from a distance but are full partners.

Theologically, God's indicative always precedes His imperative: God has done this for you, therefore respond in this manner. The action called for here in this verse is predicated upon the content in verses 6-11. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 2)

The Philippians had contributed financial support. But Paul doesn't limit their partnership to this one act. They have given him gifts when Paul was no farther away than Thessalonica (Phil 4:16). And the Philippians had been a comfort to Paul from the very beginning. (LifeLight)

*from the first day.* When Paul first came to Philippi (see Ac 16:12). (CSB)

From the very day (Acts 20:18) that Paul shared the Gospel with the Philippians, they joined together with him by believing the Gospel and seeking to extend that Gospel to others. (TLSB)

*now.*† Toward the close (see 2:24) of Paul's first Roman imprisonment (see Ac 28:16–31) or possibly of an imprisonment at Ephesus. (CSB)

**1:6-8** This section completes the thought begun in verse 3. The participial clause, "being confident" (pepoithoos), is added to the main sentence, "I thank my God" (eucharistoo). In other words, Paul can thank God most heartily because he has confidence in the endurance through the grace and power of God. (Stoeckhardt)

**1:6** *I am sure* – The Apostle is absolutely sure of this that God will bring the good work of faith begun in the Philippians to full completion. To him those Christians are the elect of God who cannot fail. He regards every congregation as an assembly of God's elect. (Stoeckhardt)

What this then means is made clear by the sentence introduced by "that" (hoti). The thought then runs like this: "You have remained in the faith until now, and I have this firm confidence that you will remain in the faith until the end. (Stoeckhardt)

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)

*work in you.* Paul is confident, not only of what God has done "for" the readers in forgiving their sins, but also of what he has done "in" them (see v. 11). "Work" refers to God's activity in saving them. (CSB)

The Apostle would make it a special point here to assert that it is God alone who works faith and preserves it. (Stoeckhardt)

*completion at the day of Jesus Christ* – When Jesus had completed His work of redemption, He said on the cross, "It is finished." Here Paul uses a related word to assure Christians that God will also complete the work of redemption in our lives. (TLSB)

*day of Jesus Christ.* His return, when their salvation will be brought to completion (see 1:10; 2:16; 1Co 1:8; 5:5; 2Co 1:14). It is God who initiates salvation, who continues it and who will one day bring it to its consummation.

When Christ will return to judge the living and the dead (Mt 26:64). (TLSB)

**1:7** *I hold in my heart* – Proclaiming the Gospel can bring harsh treatment as was the case with Paul. But the Gospel cannot be limited by human restrictions. It sets us free even if we are locked up. Being imprisoned doesn't lessen Paul's zeal to share God's grace. It just takes a different path.

The heart is the place of affection and deep thought. Paul has the Philippian Christians continually in mind with deep affection. (TLSB)

*partakers with me of grace.* Not even imprisonment and persecution can change such sharing. Even in Paul's imprisonment they willingly identified themselves with Paul by sending Epaphroditus and their financial gifts. They had become one with Paul in his persecution. (CSB)

The Philippians joined Paul in gratefully receiving God's grace through His Word and promises. (TLSB)

*defense and confirmation of the gospel* – This is not a call to arms but a response to those who speak against the Gospel (Acts 9:22). The Gospel does not undermine the OT but fulfills it (Mt. 5:17). Jesus is the Christ to whom all the promises and prophets of the OT looked forward. Jesus' life, works, and words demonstrated this clearly. The NT relates that the Gospel is confirmed as it continually fulfills what the prophets predicted (e.g., Acts 2; 2 Peter 1:19). (TLSB)

The Apostle now points to his present condition, his imprisonment, and what it really means. By enduring his imprisonment manfully, say he, he defends and confirms the Gospel. As he is doing that, he is thinking of the Philippians and bears them in his heart. (Stoekhardt)

**1:8** *God is my witness.* Greek is *martyreo*, "to testify," "bear witness." The English "martyr" is one who dies for his or her testimony. Paul appeals to God as a witness of how strong his affections are toward the Philippians. One's witness to oneself was regarded with suspicion (John 8:13). Other witnesses were required to verify the truth. Even Jesus deferred to the witness of the Father regarding the truth of who He was (John 8:18). (TLSB)

From Revelation Bible study – PP lesson 1:

- .Testimony meant eyewitness to something that could stand up in court.
- .Witness would be willing to back it up with his name, wealth and life.
- .Later, base for our word martyr.
- .It is giving a faithful witness by word and daily living including dying as a Christian.

*affection of Christ Jesus.* The deep yearning and intense, passionate love exhibited by Jesus himself and now fostered in Paul by his union with Christ. This affection reaches out to all impartially and without exception. (CSB)

This literally means "desire...with the inward part"; the location within a person where the deepest feelings reside. Paul cares about the same things in the same way as Christ Jesus. (TLSB)

In Latin "viscera." It is not to be understood physically but metaphorically. Note the remarkable union among Christ, Paul and the Philippians. Paul says that he yearns for all of them. Normally we yearn for some more than for others. (Exegetical Notes – Bult)

The KJV has "...I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. He yearns to see them all. This claim he yet strengthens by an oath, "God is my witness," (*martus gar mou ho theos*). He appeals to God that he is saying the truth. "In the heart of Jesus Christ" (*en splanchnois Christou Jesou*) he yearns for them.

The heart of Jesus Christ is beating in him. Christ dwells in him. It is not mere human affection that fills him toward them. He loves them with the love of Christ, in the mystic union with Christ. It is the affection which Christ cherishes for His own, this affection fills and animates the Apostle. (Stoeckhardt)

Christ yearns with a burning desire for His believers. This love of Christ is as it were infused into the hearts of all believers by the Holy Spirit, so that they in turn are enflamed with heavenly love towards Christ and all His brethren. That describes the intimate attitude of the Apostle towards the Philippians. (Stoeckhardt)

**1:9-11** “These prayers and passages about our ignorance and inability have been written for us...We should first thank God from the heart that by His Son He has delivered us from the darkness of ignorance and the captivity of sin and death” (FC SD II 15). 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)

**1:9** *it is my prayer* – Often the best way to influence someone is to pray for them. Paul encouraged the Philippians by describing what he begs God for on their behalf. While they have abounded in grace, Paul knows they will need to love each other more and more in the difficult times ahead. Christian love should not be a blind love, but a love abounds in the knowledge of God and what God is doing in the lives of others. (LifeLight)

*abound more and more.* Real love requires growth and maturation (see 1Th 3:12; 4:10; 2Th 1:3). (CSB)

The Philippians are in a good way, but they are still in need of growth. (Stoeckhardt)

Our actions that flow out of love are based on our attitude. Our attitudes are influenced by what we have learned or are learning. Therefore, Paul’s phrase is right on. We need to keep growing in God’s Word so that our actions evermore reflect God’s love for us.

*With knowledge.* The way love grows (cf. Col 1:9). (CSB)

*all discernment.* Practical discernment and sensitivity. Christian love is not mere sentiment; it is rooted in knowledge and understanding. (CSB)

Fallen human nature continually produces counterfeit notions of love. Paul prays that our love may abound, not just more and more (quantity) but with knowledge and discernment (quality). Love does not mean indulging our appetites, nor is it empty sentiment. We depend on God’s revelation in the Word to know, in fact, what love is. (TLSB)

**1:10** *approve what is excellent.* Christians are to approve (and practice) what is morally and ethically superior. (CSB)

Knowledge and discernment (v. 9) allow us to test and recognize the things that have value because they endure, such as truth and mercy. (TLSB)

Canadian police training to detect counterfeit money is no to study the various bogus bills floating around but to study their currency so thoroughly that when counterfeit bill shows up they will recognize it instantly.

Literally: “That you may test the things that differ,” i.e., to distinguish between good and evil, lawful and unlawful, cf Rom 2:18. In this a Christian shows his true character that he tests and proves everything with the question: Will my God approve of this before going into it. To this end he uses his Christian knowledge and moral sense. Only in the degree that Christians increase in their Christian knowledge and moral sense does love increase and do it duty. For that reason the Apostle prays that their love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all judgment. Christians can become so expert in this judgment, that they can, as by instinct, discern what is evil and displeases God. As they then shun and avoid these things, they come to lead a sincere life that is without offense, and so they beware of the pitfalls of sin. (Stoekhardt)

Discernment will help them avoid the traps Satan lays to trick and destroy the people of God. (LifeLight)

*pure and blameless.* The goal of Christians in this life is to be without any mixture of evil and not open to censure because of moral or spiritual failure. (CSB)

The Gospel is the most excellent of all things because it declares God’s grace in Christ and produces faith in that grace. You will be found pure and blameless because it is God’s own work (1 John 3:9). (TLSB)

*for the day of Christ.* Then the goal will be perfectly realized (see note on v. 6), and then Christians must give an account (see 2Co 5:10). (CSB)

**1:11** *filled with the fruit of righteousness.* What is expected of all Christians (cf. Mt 5:20–48; Heb 12:11; Jas 3:18; see also Am 6:12; Gal 5:22). (CSB)

The righteousness that God declares to people produces a regenerate soul that actually things, speaks, and does what is right. (TLSB)

*through Jesus Christ.* Produced by Christ (in union with him) through the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 15:5; Eph 2:10). (CSB)

Jesus Christ is the measure of righteousness. By becoming a man, He actually lived out that righteousness – He lived “rightly” or perfectly. His life is proved as a covering for us by grace and the forgiveness of sins. His life is actually lived out though us as His Spirit regenerates and moves us to follow His example. (TLSB)

The Apostle makes no mention of the current faults of Christians which occur through the weakness of their flesh and which are forgiven them daily and richly through Christ. So then God also looks upon a Christian as perfectly clean, since He Himself continually forgives his sins, which are due to his frailty. These daily falterings do not prevent his progress in Christian knowledge, sanctification, and good works. But all this he owes to Christ. That the Apostle asks all this for the Philippians shows how dear these Christians are to him. (Stoekhardt)

*to the glory and praise of God.* The ultimate goal of all that God does in believers (see Eph 1:6, 12, 14). (CSB)

**1:3–11** Paul continues the introduction of his Letter to the Philippians by expressing his prayer, appreciation, and yearning for these fellow believers. We who claim the Christian faith may see, by contrast, how far our thoughts, passions, and labors miss the focus of the Christian life. Yet, God still welcomes our prayer. Confidence that God will complete the good work He has begun in us is still justified. Christ’s righteousness is abundantly available to us in His Word. • Dear Lord Jesus, fill our lives

with the fruit of Your righteousness that we might abound in love, approve what is excellent, and be pure and blameless on the day of Your return. Amen. (TLSB)

#### GOSPEL – Luke 3:1-14

##### *John the Baptist Prepares the Way*

**In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea 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 baptized 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 baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” 13 And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to o.” 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.”**

**3:1–2** Historians frequently dated an event by giving the year of the ruler’s reign in which the event happened. (CSB)

The incarnation of our Lord is a historical event. Luke tells us when the messenger sent ahead (Mal 3:1) began calling out in the desert, “Prepare the way for the Lord.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

Luke continually relates his account of Jesus’ life to known historical facts, inviting readers to see the life of Jesus in historical context. Careful comparisons with contemporary sources demonstrate Luke’s accuracy. (TLSB)

**3:1** *fifteenth year.* Several possible dates could be indicated by this description, but the date A.D. 25–26 (Tiberius had authority in the provinces beginning in 11) best fits the chronology of the life of Christ. The other rulers named do not help pinpoint the beginning of John’s ministry, but only serve to indicate the general historical period. (CSB)

*Tiberius* – Tiberius’ reign was one of great political intrigue and included periodic episodes of famine and inflation. He was an excellent military leader, but a mediocre administrator in spite of his attempts to follow in the steps of Augustus, an emperor known for great achievements at building and administration. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Roman sources tell us that Tiberius became co-regent with Augustus in AD 11/12, then sole emperor in AD 14. That time frame suggests that John’s ministry began somewhere between AD 26 and 29. (TLSB)

*Pontius Pilate.* The Roman prefect who then ruled in Judea, Samaria and Idumea. (CSB)

Pontius Pilate was the fifth Roman Prefect, or governor, of Judea. Appointed by Tiberius, he reigned from AD 26 to 39. His rule concluded just prior to the accession of Caligula amid a period of tremendous political strife. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

*Herod tetrarch of Galilee.* At the death of Herod the Great (4 B.C.), his sons—Archelaus, Herod Antipas and Herod Philip—were given jurisdiction over his divided kingdom. Herod Antipas became the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (see note on Mt 14:1). (CSB)

Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee from 4 BC to AD 39. When his father (Herod the Great 37-4 BC) died, the kingdom was divided between the sons: Archelaus, Herod Philip, and Herod Antipas. The term “tetrarch” originally referred to one who ruled over a quarter of a region or province. However, it took on a pejorative connotation, implying a petty ruler. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Another son of Herod the Great. Philip ruled areas north and west of Galilee from 4 BC to AD 34. (TLSB)

*Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene.* Nothing more is known of this Lysanias than that his name has been found in certain inscriptions. (CSB)

Little is clear about this character. Josephus mentions more than one Lysanias. Multiple inscriptions bearing this name have been unearthed. (TLSB)

**3:2** *high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.* Annas was high priest from A.D. 6 until he was deposed by the Roman official Gratus in 15. He was followed by his son Eleazar, his son-in-law Caiaphas and then four more sons. Even though Rome had replaced Annas, the Jews continued to recognize his authority (see Jn 18:13; Ac 4:6); so Luke included his name as well as that of the Roman appointee, Caiaphas. (CSB)

Family dominated the Jewish high priesthood for most of Jesus’ lifetime and beyond. Remains of Caiaphas’s house and his ossuary (bone coffin) have been unearthed. (TLSB)

Originally the high priest served in that office for life. However, the Romans did not allow such terms and appointed high priests by their own authority. The Jews may have gotten around this by having two high priests, but only one in “authority,” who in this case would be Annas. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

*word of God.* The source of John’s preaching and authority for his baptizing. God’s message came to John as it came to the OT prophets (cf. Jer 1:2; Eze 1:3; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1). (CSB)

By placing this narrative in a historical context that is both Roman and Jewish, Luke shows that the word of God that comes to John (ἐγένετο ῥῆμα θεοῦ) is a significant event in both world and salvation history. “The word of God came to John” is the main clause of the sentence, upon which all the historical phrases and clauses are dependent. It recalls the first words of Jeremiah in the LXX τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ ὃ ἐγένετο (Jer 1:1; cf. λόγος, “word,” in Jer 1:2, 4, 11; 13:3; Is 38:4; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1), and places John in the category of a prophet. ῥῆμα, “word,” is a significant term for the proclamation of these words and events now happening, which signal that a new era has dawned. The word of God now comes through John, carrying forward the revelation that began with the angel Gabriel’s announcement to Mary (Lk 1:37–38).



John's prophetic call places him in the old covenant, but the content of his preaching places him in the new. (CC p. 148)

Zechariah is Hebrew for Yahweh remembered" – and indeed he did! John was to be a principle [layer in God's holy plan of redemption. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

*wilderness.* Refers to a desolate, uninhabited area, not necessarily a sandy, waterless place. (CSB)

This evokes memories for the Israelites, especially since the specific locale in the wilderness is the Jordan. The OT prophesied that God would begin his eschatological restoration of Israel in the desert in a new exodus that would transcend Israel's first wilderness wanderings (e.g., Is. 41:17-20; 43:19-21; Ezek 20:33-38; Hos 2:14-23). (CC p. 148)

God's Word did not come in an expected manner – with regality to a palace or temple courts. No it came of all places – in the desert, the wilderness. A word study of "wilderness/desert" often represents the place where God first found, called, and wed His people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

**3:3** *around the Jordan* – This area is also laden with theological connections. When Israel crossed the Jordan River, it was a significant passage from their wilderness wanderings into the Promised Land (Joshua 3). As with the Red Sea crossing, there are also strong baptismal overtones, confirmed by 1 Cor. 10:2: Joshua, like Moses, leads his people across a boundary of water. (CC pp 148-149)

Likely the Judean desert just north of the Dead Sea. (TLSB)

*baptism of repentance.* John's baptism represented a change of heart, which includes sorrow for sin and a determination to lead a holy life. (CSB)

John called for a change of heart and a commitment to holy living. This repentance was sealed with a baptism. (TLSB)

John's baptism is a repudiation of the old way of life and a conversion that includes faith that the eschatological era of salvation is dawning. (CC p. 149)

This is the first mention of Baptismos in the NT. John's baptism and ministry were to serve God's people by preparing them for the Messiah's advent. The ministry and Baptism of the Great Commission is intended for all nations and is to remain until Christ's Second Coming. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

The word Baptismua "baptism" can refer to a variety of religious washings and cleansings. The point of the word and verse is not to prescribe a specific method of baptizing, but to emphasize "total immersion" in repentance and forgiveness. Being "immersed in the Word and the means of grace," has direct baptismal application. Immersion in repentance and forgiveness is the mark that identifies a person's membership in God's kingdom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

*forgiveness of sins.* Christ would deliver the repentant person from sin's penalty by dying on the cross. (CSB)

John's baptism was not "in the name of Jesus" (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; cf 8:12; 22:16) nor in the name of the Trinity (Mt 29:19). Therefore, John's baptism did not initiate people into Jesus, the Trinity,

or God's kingdom. It was preparatory. Yet the text states that it had the power to bring those baptized "to the forgiveness of sins," and that forgiveness comes from Jesus. (CC p. 150)

**3:4-6** Like the other evangelists (Mt 3:3; Mk 1:2-3), Luke quotes Is 40:3-4 to emphasize that John's work fulfills prophecy by preparing the people for the Messiah's arrival. *all flesh*. In contrast to Mt and Mk, Lk includes the promise of Is 40:5. He underlines a major theme, that Jesus came for both Jews and Gentiles. (TLSB)

**3:4** *Prepare the way*. Before a king made a journey to a distant country, the roads he would travel were improved. Similarly, preparation for the Messiah was made in a moral and spiritual way by the ministry of John, which focused on repentance and forgiveness of sin and the need for a Savior. (CSB)

John's baptism enrolled the people in preparatory catechesis that would culminate when Jesus is "taken up" (9:51, a reference to death, resurrection, and ascension) and the Holy Spirit would descend on the church at Pentecost. (CC p. 150)

*of the Lord* – John's baptism turns the people to the Lord and sets them in motion on the way of the Lord, a journey by grace, a way of new life. This bath of repentance cleansed those baptized so that when holiness would arrive in the person of Jesus, they would be prepared to meet Him. The way of the Lord is a catechetical road, the way of life in the person and works of the Messiah, Jesus. (CC p. 150)

*make his paths straight* – The vivid language of Is. 40 proclaims that the preparation for this road means dramatic changes in the topography of Israel. (3-6). Luke 3:5 is dependent on 3:4b. Only Luke among the synoptics adds the four images from Is. 40:4 and 40:5b. The Messiah must enter his holy city unimpeded and accomplish his destiny. The road made crooked by brokenness must be made straight through the preaching that calls for repentance, turning from sin to God. (CC pp. 150-51)

**3:5** *every valley shall be filled* – God clears it out of the way. Through repentance – contrition and faith – we are made ready. Only after God has finished His preparatory work will all flesh see the salvation of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

**3:6** *all flesh*. God's salvation was to be made known to both Jews and Gentiles—a major theme of Luke's Gospel (see note on 2:31). (CSB)

An important point can be made about the word *pas*, "all." The NT contains 406 uses of the word. Of those 27% are in Luke and Acts. This means to corroborate that Luke is profoundly interested in expressing the universality of the Gospel. Jesus Christ is the Savior of all. His love is universal. Christ and the Gospel show no partiality to race or social status. All flesh will see the salvation of God! (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Ezekiel 18:23 "Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?"

1 Timothy 2:4 "who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth"

**3:7** *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." (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Offspring of poisonous snakes, which often function as symbols of deception and malice (cf Is 59:4-5). (TLSB)

*wrath to come.* A reference to both the destruction of Jerusalem (21:20–23), which occurred in A.D. 70, and the final judgment (Jn 3:36). (CSB)

Destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) and the final judgment on the Last Day. (TLSB)

Just as snakes in brush piles flee when the pile is set on fire, so also these crowds run to him in the desert in the face of God’s impending wrath. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

**3:8** *bear fruit in keeping with repentance* – The fruits of faith give evidence that repentance has taken place. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Gk *metanoia*, “a change of mind.” (TLSB)

*we have Abraham as our father* – The Pharisees and Sadducees, named in Matthew’s gospel, would have found it most difficult to submit to John’s baptism because they believed that they already had been grafted into Abraham’s covenant through circumcision. One Jesus’ severest criticisms of the Pharisees’ oral law will involve these kinship laws. Jesus will show that membership in the kingdom (i.e. the Abrahamic covenant) is through faith, not through bloodlines and genealogy. St Paul will affirm this point in Romans 1-4, citing Gen 15:6 in Rom. 4:3. (CC p. 152)

*these stones* – 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. (CC p. 152)

Wordplay in Aram; these two words have a similar sound. John derisively dismissed spiritual blessing based on race. (TLSB)

**3:9** *ax ... at the root.* A symbolic way of saying that judgment is near for those who give no evidence of repentance. (CSB)

John warns that the axe is laid to the root of the tree that does not bear good fruit and this tree will be thrown into the fire. God’s wrath is beginning to be poured out already now in the ministry of John. It will reach a climax with the death of Jesus. (CC p. 152)

Stresses the urgency of John’s call to repentance and the reality of God’s judgment. Cf Is 10:33-34; Jer 46:22-23. God described Israel as an unproductive vine coming under His judgment in Is 5:1-7. (TLSB)

*fire.* A symbol of judgment (Mt 7:19; 13:40–42). (CSB)

Fire is one of the themes of John’s preaching, and this is its first use in this passage (see 3:16–17). Fire suggests the wrath and judgment of God, a common expression in the OT (Jer 11:16; 21:14; 22:7; Ezek 15:6–7). In the Qumran scrolls, God’s eschatological wrath is likened to overflowing “rivers of Belial [Satan]” and to “a consuming fire in all its streams, to destroy every tree, green and dry, from its banks.” This combines the imagery of fire and water poured out in God’s final judgment to consume trees—a combination similar to that found in Lk 3:7, 9. (CC)

**3:10** *what shall then do* – Τί οὖν ποιήσωμεν—The aorist subjunctive is deliberative. There is an urgency to their question. (CC p. 146)

More than simply feeling sorrow and remorse, the truly penitent seek a godly alternative to sinful living. (TLSB)

To commit to or cause to happen. – They are asking a catechetical question, similar to Luther’s response to the commandments, “What does this mean?” All of Israel should be asking this urgent question in view of John’s ministry, especially the Pharisees and the religious establishment of Jerusalem. But only the tax collectors and soldiers are the only ones to come asking. (CC p. 153)

Many in the crowd – particularly the tax collectors and soldier – probably were “unchurched” and simply ignorant. They needed the third use of the Law to guide their new man of faith in sanctified living. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

More than simply feeling sorrow and remorse, the truly penitent seek a godly alternative to sinful living. (TLSB)

**3:11** *two tunics*. A tunic was something like a long undershirt. Since two such garments were not needed, the second should be given to a person in need of one (see 9:3). (CSB)

Worn under the cloak. In counseling his hearers to share, John anticipates Jesus’ command (12:32–34) and the practice of the Early Church (Ac 2:44–45; 4:34–37). (TLSB)

John enjoins charity in the basics of food and clothing. The Kiton was an undergarment worn over the bare body beneath an outer coat. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

This anticipates Jesus’ instructions to the Twelve about two cloaks and other provisions; they are to be dependent on the Lord of the harvest to provide for them (9:3). (CC p. 154)

**3:12** *Tax collectors*. Taxes were collected for the Roman government by Jewish agents, who were especially detested for helping the pagan conqueror and for frequently defrauding their own people. (CSB)

τελώναι—Only Luke among the evangelists describes tax collectors and other sinners coming to be baptized by John (3:10–14). This exclusive Lukan material prepares for Jesus’ table fellowship with tax collectors. In 5:27, Luke emphasizes Levi’s character as “tax collector,” i.e., sinner, highlighting Jesus’ table fellowship *with sinners*. In 7:29 and 7:34, Luke again places the tax collectors in the center of Jesus’ table fellowship as those who accept him as the Messiah prophesied in the OT. In 15:2, the murmuring Pharisees lay down a charge against Jesus that sums up their opinion of his table fellowship: “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” The opposition of the Pharisees to the tax collectors comes to a head in 18:9–14 in the unique Lukan parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Luke’s final use of “tax collector” in 19:2 is to call Zacchaeus a “chief tax collector” (ἀρχιτελώνης), and Jesus’ exhortations to Zacchaeus as to how to amend his sinful life are similar to John’s exhortations to these tax collectors. (CC p. 146)

**3:13** *collect no more than you are authorized* – John’s answer supports Luther’s doctrine of vocation. John does not tell them to abandon their professions, but to serve God honestly in their present station in life. Tax collectors were prone to charging more than the government commanded. Soldiers often accompanied tax collectors; they were underpaid and prone to excessive violence. John commands that they not “extort”(διασειο, “shake violently” – a “shake down) but be honest and content. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

**3:14** *soldiers*. Limited military forces were allowed for certain Jewish leaders and institutions (such as those of Herod Antipas, the police guard of the temple, and escorts for tax collectors). The professions of

tax collector and soldier as such were not condemned, but the common unethical practices associated with them were. (CSB)

Jewish temple guards or even Romans. Detail anticipates Ac, when numerous soldiers convert to Christianity (Ac 10; 16:25–34). Luther: “He did not condemn their office or advise them to stop doing their work.... He praised the military profession, but at the same time he forbade its abuse.... Therefore even under the New Testament the sword is established by God’s word and commandment, and those who use it properly and fight obediently serve God and are obedient to his word” (AE 46:97–98). (TLSB)