

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea² and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”⁴ John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.⁵ People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan.⁶ Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Sermon Hymn: 16 On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry

Sermon: Desert Pathfinding

Offering: *(Please remember to sign the Friendship Register.)*

Hymn: 47 Behold, a Branch is Growing

Benediction

Closing Hymn: 552 v. 1, 12, 3 By All the Saints Still Striving

Ushers: This Week – Dan Stern & Brady Broedlow
Next Week – Jesse Horta & John Hinz

Greeters: This Week – Dave & Andrea Stewart
Next Week – Richard & Elaine Engelhart

The new greeter and usher schedules are being finalized. Please let Kelly Vogel or Pastor Swanson know if you would like to be added or removed.

Cleaning: This Coming Week – Al & Linda Haberman
The Following Week – Please Volunteer to Help
(There is a sign-up sheet in the back of church.)

The 2nd Week of Advent – Dec. 7 & 8

P.O. Box 86, Helenville, Wisconsin

Pastor: Mark Swanson Church Tel: 920-674-3307

Principal: Craig Winkler School Tel: 262-582-3010

Organist: Ken Neipert

We Welcome You!

Order of Worship: p 15

Opening Hymn: 28 Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord

Prayer of the Day:

M: *Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Protect us by your strength and save us from the threatening dangers of our sins; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.*

C: Amen.

First Lesson - Isaiah 11:1-10

David's dynasty died in 586 B.C. The Babylonians served as the ax of God that cut off the line of Jesse and made David's family tree nothing but a stump. The lifeless stump was a witness to God's judgment. But behold, a branch is growing! A new shoot sprouts from Jesse's stump. God would renew the stump of David's kingdom, but it wouldn't be the restoration of an earthly rule and reign over Israel. No, God had greater things in mind. Instead, David's greater Son would rule over a renewed earth and heaven. "I am making everything new" (Revelation 21:5). In this renewed kingdom, sin and its effects are gone; peace and righteousness rule. The Root of Jesse is a banner for the peoples, and his place of rest will be glorious.

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. ² The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—³ and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; ⁴ but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. ⁶ The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. ⁷ The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. ⁹ They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰ In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

Psalm of the Day - Psalm 130, p. 114

Second Lesson - Romans 15:4-13

God renewed the hope of his people by raising up the root of Jesse. Hope in him reshapes our hearts and the resulting fruits of repentance show themselves in our renewed lives. Examples of those fruits can be seen in the unity of our walk and our witness and in our acceptance of our brothers and sisters. The Holy Spirit brings forth such faith and fruit to the glory and praise of God.

⁴ For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. ⁸ For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs ⁹ so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." ¹⁰ Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." ¹¹ And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples." ¹² And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him." ¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Verse of the Day: Alleluia. Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. All mankind will see God's salvation. Alleluia. (Luke 3:4, 6 cf. NIV)

Gospel - Matthew 3:1-12

A voice in the desert cried out, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!" A fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, John dressed like the first Elijah (2 Kings 1:8) and fulfilled the role of the second Elijah (Malachi 4:5-6) as foretold by Gabriel (Luke 1:17). Many people responded to John's preaching with repentance, baptism, and spiritual renewal. Others neither repented nor produced the fruits of a life renewed by the Spirit. John warned them that God's ax chops down unfruitful trees and leaves only stumps as witness to his judgment. John told both groups that the Messiah was near: near to the people to save them; near to the religious leaders to judge them. Harvest time had come, and God's winnowing fork was in his hand to separate the wheat from the chaff.