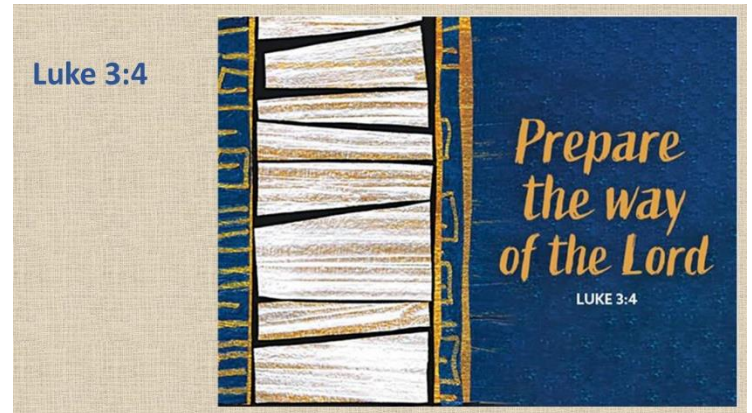


The Readings on This Day

***Click on the links for the Bible Verse(s)

Second Sunday in Advent

The origin of Advent as a season of fasting to prepare for baptisms at Epiphany is evident on the Second Sunday, which introduces the preaching and baptismal ministry of John the Baptist. God comes, in the past in the history of Israel and the incarnation of Jesus, in the present in the word and sacrament of each Sunday, and in the future at the end of all things. The preaching of John the Baptist calls us to prepare for God—perhaps in many ways quite different from our preparing for Christmas.



[Malachi 3:1-4](#)

The passage from Malachi is chosen as an example of the religious expectation that a messenger would urge the people to prepare for the messiah. Christians hear Malachi's messenger, like the voice of John the Baptist, speaking also to us, calling us to keep the covenant of our baptism and to purify our lives from sin.

[The Psalm for the Day](#)

In response to the call of Malachi, we join in one of Luke's canticles. [Luke 1:68-79](#), the Song of Zechariah, adds Christian references that cite messianic promises (vv. 76-79) to a Jewish psalm-song that resembles the prayer that was appointed for circumcisions (vv. 68-75). The focus is not only on the infant boy, here taken to be the young John the Baptist, but encompasses the whole of Israel. For centuries, Christians who sing Morning Prayer have begun each day with this song of praise. There are three settings of the Song of Zechariah in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*: p. 303, #250, and #552.

[Philippians 1:3-11](#)

Paul's joy comes not from holiday preparation but through his faith in God's grace, compassion, and evidence of righteousness. As Paul awaits Christ's second coming, we join him by also meeting Christ in holy communion and anticipating the celebration of Christ's birth.

[Luke 3:1-6](#)

By listing authorities in the Roman Empire and in Jerusalem's temple staff, and by setting John the Baptist next to Isaiah near the Jordan, Luke presents a detailed setting for Jesus' adult life and ministry. Christ stands within human history, fulfilling in unexpected ways the religious expectations of his people. Also today, the body of Christ lives in the real world and shows to "all flesh" God's salvation. We are to reorder the world and build a royal triumphal highway for the coming of the Lord, in the present and the future.