

and power with the event of the greatest importance: "the Word of God came to John...in the desert." The repeated emphasis of the text is the Word of God. It is the Word that came to John. The people came to John because of the Word. He was the voice but not the Message. He was the fulfillment of the promise of the messenger, but there was another that he proclaimed. The messenger proclaimed the message that the forgiveness of sins, the restoration of a people to God was about to appear in the wilderness. The hills of sin and the crooked path of deceit were about to give way to the level ground and straight path that leads to eternal life in Jesus.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

¶ O Lord God, the Father of all light and wisdom, You are righteous in all Your ways and true in all Your judgments. We give thanks to You for Your Word; for the Law which has been written on our hearts, for Your Commandments, for Your sure Word of prophecy, and especially for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this Holy Counsel which You have given to us we praise You. We ask Your blessing on all who preach, teach, read and study Your Word, that all may hear the joyful sound of the Gospel.

Fill us with all joy and peace in believing in Jesus. Let us abound in the assurance of salvation through the power of the Holy Spirit. Help us serve You with clean hands, love You with pure hearts, worship You with a beautiful mouth, obey You with willing minds, trust You with perfect confidence, believe You and none other, and trust You above all the world.

To this end, guard and preserve us that the devil, the world and our own flesh may not deceive us, nor lead us into error, unbelief, and sin. Teach us to watch and pray always, that, abiding faithful even unto death, we may be accounted worthy to escape those things that will come to pass on the Earth. In the end, let us stand before the Son of Man that we will obtain the inheritance which He has promised to all who love and serve Him.

We pray for a special blessing on our homes and families. Allow Jesus to rule the hearts of parents and children. Give strength and healing, as it be in Your will, to the sick. Give the comfort of the Holy Spirit to those who sorrow. Give Your Fatherly guidance to the perplexed. In all things, lead us to look now and always to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith and life.

Hear us as we bring to You our private petitions. (**Time of silent prayer.**)

In the Holy name of Jesus, Who will receive to Himself all who believe, we bring our prayer.

© Amen.

ADVENT TWO

Chant Tone



Introit

The voice of one crying in the | wilderness:^{*}

"Prepare the way of the Lord, make His — paths straight."

Hear, O my people, while I ad — monish you!^{*}

O Israel, if you would but lis | ten to Me!

I am the Lord your God, Who brought you up out of the land of — Egypt.^{*}

Open your mouth wide, and I will — fill it.

But my people did not listen | to My voice;^{*}

Israel would not sub | mit to Me.

Oh, that My people would lis | ten to Me,^{*} that Israel would walk | in My ways!

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy — Spirit;
as it was in the be — ginning,^{*}
is now, and will be forever. — Amen.

The voice of one crying in the | wilderness:^{*}

"Prepare the way of the Lord, make His — paths straight."

(Antiphon, Luke 3:4b;
Psalm 81:8, 10-11, 13)

Collect of the Day

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your Only-Begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

Gradual

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of — Zion!^{*}

Shout aloud, O daughter of Je | rusalem!

Behold, your king is com | ing to you,^{*}

righteous and having salva | tion is He.

Blessèd is he who comes in the name | of the Lord.^{*}

We bless you from the house | of the Lord.

(Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26 alternative)

ENTRANCE PRAYER: O Lord, our Father and Redeemer, from everlasting to everlasting You are God. With joy and thanksgiving we acknowledge that we are indebted to You for our existence. Without You we cannot live, and apart from You life has no meaning. Bend down Your ear and listen as we pray. For permitting us to enter another church year, for finding us and leading us like a Shepherd through Your Word, for keeping Your promise and sending us a Savior, we praise Your Holy name. As we prepare for the festivities of celebrating our Lord's birth, grant us true spiritual insight that we may recognize Him as David's Son and David's Lord. Amen (So be it, Lord.)

JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS A HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT PROPHET. The Gospel lesson mentions him during Advent 3 (and we light a rose colored candle in the Advent wreath,) except in the "C" series. This year John is mentioned during Advent 2, 3 and 4. He was the last of the Old Testament Prophets, in that he was pointing to the coming of the Savior. He was also the first of the New Testament Prophets point at the Savior. John (and Jesus for that matter) had to contend with those who worked hard to deny Jesus. It should have been quite obvious to everyone that Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior was in the world. Even today we have trouble proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to Salvation. It is only to the glory of God that we have been allowed to recognize Jesus as He has been introduced to us by John, and believe in Him to Eternal Life. The hills of our doubt have become flat straight roads that lead to one place, our eternal home in Heaven.

THEME OF THE DAY:

The Level/Straight Path To Salvation

INTROIT—(Antiphon, Luke 3:4b;) Psalm 81:8, 10-11, 13

This appears to be the first liturgical use of Psalm 81 in the New Testament Church, which is interesting because David either wrote or caused this Psalm to be written specifically to introduce music and instruments into worship. We are using these selected verses today because of their connection to the rejection of Jesus, which established the New Testament Church. (Luke is covered below.)

COLLECT

We are well aware that we possess the ability to walk away from the truth of God. We ask therefore, that we be kept of pure minds, as we count down the days to the Second Coming of Christ.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON—Malachi 3:1-7b

The Day of God's coming was preceded by His "messenger." The Hebrew word for my messenger is the name Malachi. It is without a doubt a part of God's wonderful irony that He used the last of the prophets of the Old Testament to present the "messenger" prophecy of the work of John the Baptist. The text is really wonderful in the way in which it gives us the two messengers, Malachi and John, and both are Prophets of Christ. Neither messenger was the fulfillment, and yet through their appearance we know the Christ. Malachi's work was done among a people who had lost the sense of the immanence of the first Advent of Christ. John's work was done among a people who had lost the sense of the immanence of the first Advent of Christ. Our work is done among a people who have lost the sense of the immanence of the second Advent of Christ.

GRADUAL—Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26 alternative

Our expectation of peace is in the return of our king. We call out for His Second Advent. The Old Testament people put their faith in the prophecy of Zechariah, it was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. We put our faith in Christ.

EPISTLE LESSON—Philippians 1:2-11

A contrast is made between the failure of man to complete what he begins (inspiring little confidence in his plans and promises) and the certainty of God completing all that He began (inspiring confidence in His plans and promises.) In an age of uncertainty and doubt concerning claims and promises, this text can be used to give comfort and assurance regarding the certainty of God's promises.

GOSPEL LESSON—Luke 3:1-20

Luke named the rulers of the Earth, Roman and Jewish, imperial and local, secular and religious, as a statement to contrast their prominence