

## **What Shall We Do?**

John jolts us with his preaching. "You brood of vipers" certainly isn't the kind of greeting we expect to find inside the cards that are arriving in our mailboxes this month. John's description of the consequences of unrepentant and unholy living is a bit more severe than simply finding a lump of coal in one's Christmas stocking. Unfruitful trees--unrepentant lives--chopped down and burned. Chaff consumed by unquenchable fire. If this is "good news," what does bad news sound like?

Faced with the probability or even the possibility of disaster, we might ask, along with John's frightened hearers, "What should we do?" It is human instinct to want to *do* something to keep bad things from happening. So we wear seat belts and teach our kids not to talk to strangers. We install home security systems and avoid eye contact on the street. We exercise and save for retirement.

John's crowds, desperate to avoid God's wrath, beg for guidance: "What should we do?" John's answer is spoken with clarity: Share what you have. Let justice guide your behavior. Like John's questioners, we also need to take this answer to heart. Surely we know at some level where our behavior needs reforming, where our practice of stewardship and justice needs tending, where our love of God and neighbor needs energizing.

Lest we sag under the weight of our own inadequacies, there is another word in today's text that needs hearing. It is the promise of the Holy Spirit, God's indwelling presence with us. Having received the gift of the Spirit in our baptism, the question "What should we do?" is now prompted not by the fear of disaster, but in joyful response to God's gifts of forgiveness, grace, and new life in Christ. This Advent, what shall we do? Change our hearts. Love our neighbor. Rejoice because God has come to dwell with us.

**December 12, 2021**

**Third Sunday of Advent**

Welcome to First St. John Lutheran Church! We offer two services with Sunday School for youth and adults and catechism between the services. Our Sunday schedule is:

8:00 am	Early Worship
9:15 am	Sunday School / Catechism
10:30 am	Late Worship

Covid Guidelines: If you are fully vaccinated, you do not need to wear a mask. However, if you have not been vaccinated, please continue wearing a mask. We have some available near the entryway if you don't have one.

Livestream and Recorded Worship: We livestream the service on our church website at [www.firststjohn.com](http://www.firststjohn.com). Also, the service will be recorded and published to the website.

Adult Sunday School meets at 9:15 am in the lounge (middle floor of the educational building – turn right out of the door by the choir loft).

Children ages 3 through 5<sup>th</sup> grade will meet for Sunday School in the basement of the church (the JAM Room!).

Catechism Class: Class will be held from 9:15 to 10:15 am each Sunday.

Nursery is in the church basement and is currently unstaffed; you are welcome to sit with your child. A diaper changing table is available in the ladies restroom in the basement of the church.

Restrooms are in the church basement. Go to the Narthex (lobby) and take either set of steps to the basement hallway. The ladies room is at one end, and the men's room is at the other.

Flowers: If you would like to sign up for altar flowers, there is a book in the Narthex (lobby) by the telephone. Or, you can call the church office during the week to check on availability.

Memorials: If you wish to give a memorial in honor or memory of a loved one, you may mail it in or pick up a memorial card in the church office or in the Narthex (lobby) and place it in the offering plate.

Your 2022 offering envelopes are ready for pick up in the lounge. They are in alphabetical order reading from top to bottom, left to right. Envelopes are prepared for confirmed and contributing members of First St. John and friends who worship with us (upon request).

**NOTE**: If a husband and wife share offering envelopes, only the husband's name will appear on the envelope box. The computer will allow only one name per number.

If you cannot find your offering envelope box or if there is a correction or change in address or name, please call the church office at 419-691-7222.

**PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO PICK UP YOUR  
OFFERING ENVELOPES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**

**EVEN IF YOU HAVE YOUR OFFERING DEDUCTED  
FROM YOUR BANK ACCOUNT, SPECIAL ENVELOPES  
ARE IN THE BOXES FOR HOLIDAY OFFERINGS AND  
OTHER SUPPORT TO GENACROSS LUTHERAN  
SERVICES AND BENEVOLENCES.**

***Reminder: Do not use your 2022 offering envelopes  
until January 2, 2022. Thank You.***

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### **REMINDER**

**If you want a contribution included on your 2021 financial statement, please turn it in by Sunday, December 26, 2021. NOTE: If you plan on mailing your last offering, please mail early in the week to make sure it gets here by Friday, December 24th.**

**C: Amen.**

**Blessing**

P: The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus for whom we wait.

**C: Amen.**

**Dismissal**

P: Go in peace. Christ is near.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

Closing Hymn      *"Go Tell It on the Mountain"*  
Postlude

No. 290  
Dr. Pattin

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***PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE***

**ELDERS**

Tom Gaskins, Terry Ruedy

**SOUND BOARD**

Andy Hodges

**ACOLYTES**

Aubrey Swartz, McKenna Cummerow

***ORDER OF WORSHIP—10:30 am***

Prelude

Dr. Pattin

Ring of the Bell    *(please stand as you are able)*

Opening Song      *"Light of the Stable"*

Rhymer  
Praise Singers

**Lighting the Third Advent Candle**

Isaiah 35:1-2

P: The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing.

P: Blessed are you, God of might and majesty, for you promise to  
make the desert rejoice and blossom, to watch over the  
strangers, and to set the prisoners free.

*(Light the third candle)*

P: As we light these candles, satisfy our hunger with your good  
gifts, open our eyes to the great things you have done for us,  
and fill us with patience until the coming of the Lord Jesus.

P: O ransomed people of the Lord, come,

**C: let us travel on God's holy way and enter into Zion with  
singing. Amen.**

**Confession and Forgiveness**

*(All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at  
baptism)*

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who alone does  
wonders, who lifts up the lowly, who fills the hungry with good  
things.

**C: Amen.**

P: Let us confess our sin, trusting in the tender mercy of our God.

*(Silence is kept for reflection.)*

P: God for whom we wait,

**C: in the presence of one another,  
we confess our sin before you.**

**We fail in believing that your good news is for us.  
 We falter in our call to tend your creation.  
 We find our sense of self in material wealth.  
 We fear those different from ourselves.  
 We forget that we are your children  
 and turn away from your love.  
 Forgive us, Blessed One,  
 and assure us again of your saving grace. Amen.**

P: God, in Christ Jesus, has looked with favor upon you! Through the power of the Holy Spirit, + your sins are forgiven. You are children of the Most High, inheritors of the eternal promise, and recipients of divine mercy. God strengthens you anew to follow the way of peace.

**C: Amen.**

### **Prayer of the Day**

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Let us pray. Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

*(please be seated)*

### **Announcements**

#### **FIRST READING: Zephaniah 3:14-20**

*The prophet Zephaniah's message is mostly one of judgment for sin. But this reading comes from the conclusion of the book and pictures the new people of God (3:12-13). Judgment has brought repentance and salvation, and now is the time of celebration.*

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;  
 shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
 O daughter Jerusalem!

<sup>15</sup>The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,  
 he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;  
 you shall fear disaster no more.

<sup>16</sup>On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:  
 Do not fear, O Zion;  
 do not let your hands grow weak.

P: All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Israel, Word of God incarnate, Power of the Most High, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer** *(prayed by all)*

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
 thy kingdom come,  
 thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our trespasses,  
 as we forgive those who trespass against us;

And lead us not into temptation,  
 but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power,  
 and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

### **Invitation to Communion**

P: Come to Christ's banquet. Feast on God's gift of grace.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*(Please be seated)*

### **The Communion** *(distribution will be continuous)*

*If you wish to receive apple juice instead of wine, place your hand over your shoulder as you approach the person distributing the wine.*

*"All baptized Christians, believing that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly present in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, bringing to us the gift of forgiveness and the promise of eternal life, are welcome to gather at the Lord's table. Infants, children and others who have not been baptized are welcome to come to receive a blessing; please make an X with your arms across your chest."*

### **Communion Hymns**

"Soul, Adorn Yourself With Gladness" No. 488

"Eat This Bread, Drink This Cup" No. 492

*(After all have received communion, please stand.)*

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and sustain you in God's grace. Amen.

### **Prayer After Communion**

P: Most High God, you have come among us at this table. By the Spirit's power, form us to be bearers of your word, sharing gifts of mercy and grace with all, through Christ Jesus, our host and our guest.

(please be seated)

## **The Offering**

### **Chancel Choir**

*"Song of Bethlehemtown"*

Arr. Snyder

(please stand)

### **Offering Prayer**

P: God of our waiting and watching, we offer the gifts of our hearts and our lives to the service of all your people. Prepare the way before us as we meet you in this simple meal, through Christ Jesus, our pathway and our peace.

**C: Amen.**

## **The Great Thanksgiving**

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P: It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and ever-living God. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes again to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**C: (spoken) Holy, holy, holy Lord, Lord God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

P: In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

P: Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

<sup>17</sup>The LORD, your God, is in your midst,  
a warrior who gives victory;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness,  
he will renew you in his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing  
<sup>18</sup>as on a day of festival.  
I will remove disaster from you,  
so that you will not bear reproach for it.  
<sup>19</sup>I will deal with all your oppressors  
at that time.  
And I will save the lame  
and gather the outcast,  
and I will change their shame into praise  
and renown in all the earth.  
<sup>20</sup>At that time I will bring you home,  
at the time when I gather you;  
for I will make you renowned and praised  
among all the peoples of the earth,  
when I restore your fortunes  
before your eyes, says the LORD.

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **PSALM: Isaiah 12:2-6**

*In your midst is the Holy One of Israel. (Isa. 12:6)*

Surely God is my salvation;  
I will trust, and will not be afraid,  
**for the LORD God is my strength and my might;  
he has become my salvation.**

<sup>3</sup>With joy you will draw water  
from the wells of salvation.

<sup>4</sup>**And you will say in that day:**

**Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name;**

make known his deeds among the nations;  
proclaim that his name is exalted.

<sup>5</sup>**Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;  
let this be known in all the earth.**

<sup>6</sup>Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,  
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

### **SECOND READING: Philippians 4:4-7**

*The theme of joy in the first reading continues in Paul's confident words to the Philippians. Although he writes from prison, Paul finds hope in the assurance that hearts and minds are guarded securely by the peace of God.*

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

<sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*(Please stand)*

### Alleluia Verse

*Lord, let my heart be good soil,  
Open to the seed of your word.  
Lord, let my heart be good soil,  
Where love can grow  
And peace is understood.*

### Gospel Acclamation

P: The Gospel according to St. Luke Chapter 3.

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

### **GOSPEL: Luke 3:7-18**

*Before he begins his account of Jesus' ministry, Luke describes the work of John the Baptist, who proclaimed the good news in startling images. Radical generosity and faithfulness in vocation are among the fruits of repentance John identifies.*

John said 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? <sup>8</sup>Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. <sup>9</sup>Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

<sup>10</sup>And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?"

<sup>11</sup>In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." <sup>12</sup>Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" <sup>13</sup>He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." <sup>14</sup>Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

<sup>15</sup>As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, <sup>16</sup>John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup>His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

<sup>18</sup>So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

### Gospel Response

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

*(Please be seated)*

SERMON

Sermon Hymn

*"O Come, All Ye Faithful"*

Pastor Rayl

No. 283

*(Please stand)*

### Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

He came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
He suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the scriptures;

He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

### Intercessory Prayer *(following each petition)*

P: Lord in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**