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| **God’s Messengers Prepare the Way**  *Promise: God sends preachers to prepare us to meet Christ* Pastor Timothy A. Duesenberg Malachi 3:1-7b; Ps 66:1-12; Philippians 1:2-11; Luke 3:1-14 (Second Sunday in Advent), 12/8/24)  *“And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”* – v 3  **Lead In –** Key among the preparations for the advent of our Lord is repentance. To turn from sin to God. To have a change or transformation of mind and heart. And although this work is done in and through us, it is God’s work. He sends messengers equipped with God’s Word and empowered by God’s Spirit to see that this work gets accomplished. And the gift of repentance is not a once and done proposition. Rather, it is an ongoing work throughout our earthly sojourn.   1. **John the Baptist in a Long Line of Messengers**    1. What sets him apart is proximity as the forerunner…    2. Call to repentance accompanied by a baptism…    3. Emphasis on bearing fruit in keeping with repent… 2. **Bearing Fruit Is the Expectation of the Converted**    1. In both Mt and Lk warning against presumption…    2. In Christ getting back to what we were created for…    3. Paul’s confidence in the one who began a good work… 3. **Between Two Advents of Our Lord**    1. We now see accomplishment in rearview mirror…    2. What had been foreshadowed now fulfilled…    3. And the line of messengers continues…   **Final Word –** Friends, messengers proclaim God’s Word, both law and gospel. And all of us benefit from hearing His Word. It works faith with ongoing repentance and trust in Christ our Savior. It also works in us so that we bear the fruit we were created to bear to His glory. This Word is also combined with water in baptism, and with bread and wine in communion, to equip us. Do not despise or neglect this Word of God proclaimed by God’s messengers. Indeed, gladly hear and learn it.  **Ma 3:1a** “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.”  **Is 40:3** A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord.”  **Lk 3:16** John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”  **Ac 2:38** And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”  **Ep 2:8-10** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.  **Mt 7:18** “A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.”  **Bondage of the Will** in unregenerate man, but freed up after our conversion. Very carefully, we can speak of our cooperation, but not as a work we contribute…  **Ep 4:30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. | **Luke 3:1-14 ESV**  *John the Baptist Prepares the Way*  1In 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, 2during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 4As 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. 5Every 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, 6and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”  7He 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? 8Bear 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. 9Even 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.”  10And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?” 11And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” 12Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” 13And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.” 14Soldiers 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.”  **Ph 2:12-13** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.  **Ph 1:6** 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.  **Mk 1:15** “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”  **Expl to 3rd Command:** We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it. |