

Second Sunday in Advent

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The Result is Salvation

Luke 3:1-14 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ² while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. ³ And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, ⁴ as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.' ⁵ Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; ⁶ And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" ⁷ Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as *our* father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ⁹ "And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." ¹⁰ So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" ¹¹ He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." ¹² Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" ¹³ And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." ¹⁴ Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."

A baptism of repentance means a baptism which is an act of repentance. Luke calls it a baptism of repentance partially to distinguish it from the Jewish form of baptism which was for proselytes. Those who were not born into Israel but believed the word of the Lord were often baptized as part of joining the nation.

This was not a baptism of conversion. This was a baptism of repentance. That is to say that be baptized was an acknowledgement that you were a sinner who needed the grace and mercy of the Lord.

More importantly it is a baptism for the forgiveness of sin. If you look at the Greek we have eis with the accusative. This could indicate either a result or a purpose clause. They were baptized for the purpose of receiving the forgiveness of sins. They were baptized with the result of receiving the forgiveness of sins. Either way is really the same thing, they were baptized and received through it the forgiveness of sins.

But you don't even need to look at the Greek to see how true this is. The English itself makes it clear. Baptized for the forgiveness of sins. If you go to the store for milk, you come home with milk, unless you are really forgetful I guess. They were baptized for the forgiveness of sins. The result is they received the forgiveness of sins.

This is true of the baptism of John but it is also true of the entire ministry of John the Baptist. He was the forerunner and his job was to prepare the way of the Lord. The result of this preparation was that the Lord would come with His salvation.

Notice verse 6 "all flesh shall see the salvation of the Lord." This is always the result of the Lord's coming. The result is His salvation. If we talk about his coming as the messiah, or his coming through baptism, or his coming to our hearts, or even his coming on the last day, the result is His salvation.

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. ⁵ Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth;

Verse 4 is the metaphor. In what way is Jesus' coming like the preparation of a king's highway? That is explained in verse 5. Every high place brought low, every low place filled in, every crooked place made straight. The basic underlying point is that everything that is in his way will be removed. The Lord is coming with the result of salvation and nothing is going to stand in his way.

When Isaiah proclaims, "Prepare the way of the Lord," He isn't telling us that we should prepare the way. Who are we that we can prepare the way of the Lord? He is not even talking to John. He is talking to the "voice." Yes John is the voice, but the point is that it is not John who prepares the way but the message that God sent through him. The word of the Lord prepares the way, with the result that the salvation of the Lord comes. The Word of the Lord removes every obstacle in our hearts. The high places and the low place the pride and sin are removed to prepare the way for the Lord to come with salvation.

Who is the one who will prepare the way of the Lord? It's not the kings. It is John the Baptist. Notice that Luke begins with the long list of kings and high priests but the word of the Lord came to John. Normally if you want to get something done you go to the top, the emperor the king, but no the word of the Lord came to John. Not even the high priest, the one who had been anointed and appointed to bring the word of God to the people. He also was an impediment and so the word of the Lord came to John.

The Lord was coming with Salvation and nothing was going to stand in his way not emperor, kings or high priests and so the Word of the Lord came to John with the result that Salvation came to the people

⁷ Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as *our* father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

The multitudes came and John warned them, "brood of vipers, do not say to yourself we have Abraham as our father."

This also was an impediment to the salvation Christ came to bring. For thousands of years the people of Israel were protected and elevated by God so that they could proclaim his word. But now they were an impediment because they thought that salvation was a matter of hereditary. This also had to be torn down. This false notion granting these people a false security was impeding the salvation of the Lord. And the Lord through John tore it down.

What false notions and false securities block the forgiveness and mercy of God in our lives? What false senses of security cause us to think we don't have to worry about His judgment? I'm a pastor's son I know it all? I was baptized and confirmed so I'm good to go? I'm relatively a good person? I'm a Lutheran? Many people think the Lord is loving surely he isn't really going to send anyone to hell. All of these things give us a false sense of security that keep us from repentance and the salvation of our God.

What shall we do? The crowds ask. How does John answer? With the law? Yes but barely. He gives them only the barest minimum to do. Give your extra clothes to good will. Share your

food. These are the least you can do. The Lord is coming with salvation; your works will give you nothing. Bare fruits worthy of repentance but do not think that this will bring you salvation. The Lord is coming with His salvation.

If you go to meet the president or emperor, by all means put on your best suit. But don't deceive yourself into thinking that your best suit is by any means all that good. My most expensive suit is maybe \$150. I'm sure the President Trump's least expensive suit is a couple thousands at least.

This is basically what John is saying to the crowds. By all means bear fruits worthy of repentance, but don't think that these will bring you salvation. This is nothing. The Lord is coming with the result that we will receive His salvation.

The specific things that John lists for tax collectors and soldiers, don't apply to most of us. But Luther continues John's list. Luther has a good summary of the bare minimum each us should be doing in his catechism under the page called, "Table of duties." This week is probably a good week to dig out your catechism. Hopefully you can still find it. And look up that section. And review it. It's not much, you can't earn salvation but you can at least brush off your clothes a bit. You can at least take a shower, since the Lord is coming with His salvation.

The Lord is coming and the result is salvation for us. This is the message of John the Baptist. He brought salvation when he came to earth. He brings salvation through baptism. He brings salvation when he enters our hearts. He will bring salvation when He comes again.

Amen