



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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December 16, 2012

Advent 3

Sermon Text: [Luke 3:7-18](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Nehemiah 8:9-18](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 14](#)

Second Lesson: [Philippians 4:4-7](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 3:7-18](#)

Live The Good News

In your daily vocation
Knowing that the LORD is near

Grace, mercy and peace are yours from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let's think a little bit about John the Baptist. This time of year they have all those claymation, all those animation specials on TV that you watch. The Grinch, Frosty the Snowman, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and all that kind of stuff. All the characters you see at this time of the year. If you think about all of them, which one do you think John the Baptist is closest to? If you have to identify what I just read to you about John the Baptist's message, which would say he is most like? His nose wasn't red. He wasn't made of snow. Probably the Grinch, huh? Doesn't he know that it's almost Christmas time and here he is talking about the ax is at the root of the tree, and produce fruit in keeping with repentance? What a killjoy!

I once preached on this text back in Minnesota. I greeted certain people after church and a guy came out and said, "Don't you know it's almost Christmas? Why are you talking about repentance?" He kept walking or else I would have told him why. Because God does, right?

Think of how easy it is for you and me to get caught up in all the various Christmas celebrations, preparations and wrapped up in all the activities, which are all great and fine and wonderful in and of themselves, but if they distract us from the true meaning of Christmas, why Jesus came to this world, what you and I are really like and why we so desperately needed that Christ child to be born, then they're not so good. That's what John the Baptist was really good at. The one who God sent to say "Hey, it's just about Christmas time," he did it with a message that said "Repent." And he applied it to daily life. He really laid it out for them how it would look. Someone who is connected to the coming Messiah, this is what his life will look like.

So you read those paragraphs I read to you that are printed there, and then you read that last sentence, "And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them," and you probably think to yourself, where was the good news? It sounded like all Law.

The good news is that the One who was coming, whose thongs of his sandals he wasn't worthy to scoop down and untie, the One who was coming would do all the things that the prophets had said. That's the good news. To be connected to him brings about a change so that then we live the good news.

As John the Baptist shows us this morning, we live the good news in our daily vocation, wherever we are. We aren't living the good news just when we come and we sit on a padded pew and we sing a few songs and we say a few prayers. We live the good news when we walk out those doors and go back into our daily life now and live in response to who our God is and what he has done for us.

You see that the people of John's day got that message, right? Even when he spoke strong words, "you brood of vipers," I guarantee you that's not a chapter in Dale Carnegie on how to win friends and influence people, right? You brood of vipers. You people who are separated from God because you're relying on yourselves and not on your Savior. Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. Don't start to put up all the false arguments... we're Abraham's children. God can make children for Abraham out of stones, and that's really what he did, right? Isn't that what we are told in Peter? Like living stones we are being built into this spiritual house. We are living stones built on the foundation that is Jesus Christ. It's a beautiful picture. We who are dead in our sins, who have as much life as a stone, God has made alive through the work of the Spirit who leads us to believe that Jesus came and he lived in our place and died in our place and now we are right with God. So God did make sons of Abraham out of the stones. That's you and me.

People heard the message. They recognized it. They said, "What should we do?" Then they got really pointed. Tax collectors said, "What should we do? What is the fruit of repentance we should do if I've been baptized by John into the promise of this coming Messiah, a baptism for repentance and the forgiveness of sins? My sins are forgiven, now what do I do?" He says, "Don't take more than you're supposed to. Don't steal from the people like you've been doing?" The soldiers ask, "What should I do?" "Don't do the things that you know are against God's will. Don't exhort money. Don't accuse people falsely as a way to make money. Just be content with whatever your pay is." Whatever your vocation is, wherever you are in your life, he's saying to live in a way that is God pleasing.

What does that mean for you and me? Live the good news in our daily vocation. It sounds simple enough, but I think at this time of the year it gets kind of hard, doesn't it? Live in response to the good news as we are doing all this running around. During the season of Advent, I love using the Prayer of the Church for Advent, the responsive one that is in the front of the hymnal. I love it because of the phrase where it talks about at this time of the year "with a frenzy of commercialism." Help us Lord as we deal with that because I think we get caught up in it a lot. The greatest gift we can give isn't the latest toy, the latest gizmo, the latest gadget. It isn't 8" or 10". It isn't a touch or a tablet. It isn't any of these things. It's reminding each other of our Savior. In our daily vocation, that's one of the things we get to do. In your daily vocation as a parent, you

get to share that with your children. You get to teach your children about your Savior. You get to remind them that these gifts are given because God gave us the greatest gift at Christmas. He sent his Son into this world. You get to teach them that the Christmas tree that is put up is green because God's love for you is evergreen. It's eternal. It's everlasting. You get to do these things. This is your daily vocation where you get to point people to the Savior. You get to as a parent, I suppose especially, not embitter or exasperate your children, but teach them what producing fruit in keeping with repentance is.

This past week, did you seize an opportunity to share with yourself and with other people or as a parent with your children the promises of God's love in your daily vocation? I don't care what your daily vocation is, I suppose at one time or another as you were talking with a friend or a coworker, you probably talked about the shootings this week. Did you just wring your hands and throw up your hands and say, "What's this world coming to? How terrible people are." Or did you use that opportunity to express confidence that no matter what happens, God remains God and his love for me is certain even though things make my knees shake and my knees weak and things make my stomach turn. I'm going to trust that the Lord is in control. I would think this week especially as parents that is something we'd want to share with our children who might be trembling or worried about things like that.

In our daily vocation, our God gives us these opportunities. We can live our faith. We can put our faith into practice so that people see that those who are connected to Jesus Christ are different. We live for him, not just for ourselves. We don't live for our pleasures, for our wants and our desires. We might get our wants. We might get our desires. But we thank the Lord because he has given them to us.

The truth of the matter is that we don't always do that, do we? The truth of the matter is that we get distracted at this time of year by all the other things and we forget about the most important gift at times and we fall short of living for God in our daily vocation. You and I can shake our heads at the tax collectors and the soldiers and how terrible it is that they did those things. But you and I, in our vocation as friends or as a relative or as a coworker, we have failed our God. We haven't serve him perfectly. We might often just tell our kids, "Because I said so," because we are too tired and too lazy to really teach them what God wants them to be taught. We might change the subject quickly with our coworkers or just say, "Yeah, the world is terrible," but not talk about Christ because we don't want to be the religious nut. When we do all these things, we deny our God and we sin against him.

This is what makes our God's love so incredibly amazing, that he loves and forgives us in spite of how often we have failed him. He does it again and again and again. That's why we can rejoice. We are a lot like those people in Nehemiah's time. We see in God's Word what we have failed to do and we should be weeping and crying. We have to be reminded by our God and by our fellow believers from time to time that the time for weeping is over. That sin has been forgiven. The time now is for moving forward. The salvation of the Lord has been revealed, so live in that joy that is that salvation and

move forward and serve him more faithfully in the future. Don't let Satan beat you up for where you have failed because Jesus Christ took that sin away. So now, move forward and live in your daily vocation. Live the good news because the Lord is near. The ax is already at the root of the trees. The One is coming who has his fork in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into the barn. Jesus came. He's done it. He gathered the wheat into his barn. He paid for the sins of all people. He blessed the Spirit. He baptized with water and the Spirit. He poured out the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. He continues to pour out the Holy Spirit in the flame of God's Word as it's that burning flame in our hearts as we grow to know him more and more. That keeps us constantly focused that the Lord could come back at any time. Live in the joy of knowing that is going to happen. Don't live in dread of it.

Did you ever see any of those shows on some of those cable channels about survivalists? These guys that have these bunkers buried in the back yard. They have like 3,000 cans of corn or something like that set aside so they can live on it for the next five years after some zombie apocalypse or something comes. It's kind of interesting to watch and see some of the things they do. But you and I don't have to live in fear that maybe the Mayans are right and the world is going to end. I hope so. I'd much rather celebrate Christmas in heaven. So I'd miss out on a Christmas at home here, so what? I'd be in heaven which is better by far.

If the world ends, that doesn't frighten me. I know that my sins are forgiven in Christ and I'm going to heaven. As a Christian, you know the same thing. Know that the end is near. It could come at any time. It might not come, but it could come. And just live in that joy of knowing that when other people are piling up canned goods because the end might come, you and I can just live in the grace of God and know that he loves us and has taken away our sins. And know that heaven is ours. Know that the Lord is near is a source of joy for you and me. What a wonderful blessing it is that we don't have to be that brood of vipers anymore. Now we are lambs of our Good Shepherd. Live that good news. Amen.