

LIVING FAITH

December 8, 2019

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR A



THE GOSPEL FOR TODAY

Matthew 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'

This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight." '

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan,

and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

TAKING THE GOSPEL HOME

"Prepare the way of the Lord!" John the Baptist's cry captures our attention every Advent. How do you prepare for company? Most of us tidy up the house. We dust and sweep and put things out of sight that we don't want others to see. It's a lot like preparing our hearts for Jesus to come and dwell there. Sometimes we have old resentments that we have allowed to fester in our hearts, a bit like cobwebs. Perhaps there are people that we need to apologize to, or put things right with. Sometimes we allow a poor self-image to keep us from doing things. Maybe it's time to try to look at ourselves as God looks at us, with love, joy and pride. Whatever it is, God calls you to fullness of life, and Advent is a time to take steps toward this. Prepare the way of the Lord by asking Him to come into your heart.

PONDER AND DISCUSS

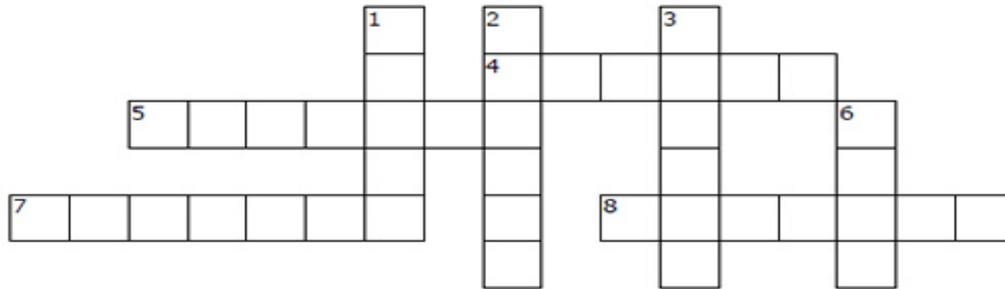
- For adults: Is there anything in your life that you need to set right this year?
- For children: Is there one thing you can do for somebody else to show Jesus that you love Him?

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A Voice in the Wilderness



In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."
Matthew 3:1-2 (NIV)



ACROSS

4. To be sorry for something bad you have done and make a change
5. What John did to people in the Jordan River
7. To get ready for something that is going to happen
8. One who speaks for God, or tells what will happen in the future

DOWN

1. The sounds that are made when people speak or sing
2. To deliver a sermon
3. An area where there is little rain and not many plants
6. The man who preached that Jesus was coming

REPENT	PREACH	VOICE	BAPTIZE
JOHN	PROPHET	DESERT	PREPARE

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THE YEAR OF MATTHEW

IN YEAR A OF THE LITURGICAL CYCLE, WE HEAR THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW PROCLAIMED

Who was Matthew? When did he write this Gospel? Who was he writing for?

The Gospel of Matthew was probably written in the between 70 and 100 A.D. Matthew (also called Levi), the former tax collector who became Jesus' disciple, is the author. The original audience may have been the church in Antioch of Syria. Its members included Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Is there a major theme in Matthew's Gospel?

The Gospel of Matthew tells the story of Jesus of Nazareth, the long-expected Messiah who brought the kingdom of God to earth. This Gospel is full of images of Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecies in the Old Testament.

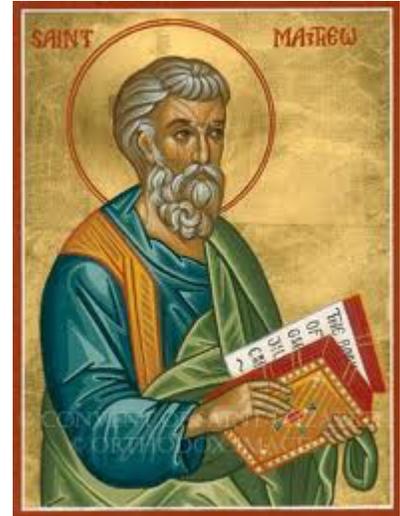
Matthew's Gospel is one of the Synoptic Gospels...

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as "the Synoptic Gospels." The three have a lot in common, sharing many of the same accounts in the same order, with similar wording. "Synoptic means: "seen together." They are "an account of the events from the same point of view or under the same general aspect" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

The Five Discourses in Matthew's Gospel:

The five discourses are large blocks of Jesus' teaching found throughout Matthew's gospel. They are:

1. *The Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7)*
2. *Commissioning of the Twelve (chapter 10)*
3. *Parables of the Kingdom (chapter 13)*
4. *Talking of the Church (chapter 18)*
5. *The Discourse at Mount of Olives (chapters 23-25)*



The image of St. Matthew is called an icon. Icons are used extensively in the Eastern Churches. An icon is not a painting, but more of a window, through which we can glimpse God's action in and through the saint depicted.

What qualities of St. Matthew can you glimpse in this icon?



SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION DECEMBER 9



In pictures and statues of the Immaculate Conception, the Blessed Virgin is depicted as pregnant and standing on a snake, the symbol of evil.

O Mary, conceived
without sin,
Pray for us
who have recourse
to thee.

In Christian theology, the Immaculate Conception refers to the doctrine which states that the Virgin Mary was conceived free from original sin by virtue of the merits of her son Jesus. The Catholic Church teaches that God acted upon Mary in the first moment of her conception, keeping her "immaculate".

The Immaculate Conception is often confused with the virgin birth of Jesus. While many Christians believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, it is primarily Roman Catholics who believe in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Although the belief that Mary was sinless, or conceived without original sin, was widely held for centuries, the doctrine was not defined as a dogma in the Catholic Church until 1854 when Pope Pius IX, declared *ex cathedra*, i.e., using papal infallibility, in his papal bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, the Immaculate Conception to be doctrine. The Catholic Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on December 8. In many Catholic countries, it is a holy day of obligation or patronal feast, and in some a national public holiday.

