

## Good Shepherd

### Bible Study

December 4, 2022: Mathew 3:1-12

#### 2nd Sunday of Advent

Opening Prayer (together): O Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

#### First Reading - New Revised Standard Version

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, <sup>2</sup>“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>3</sup>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.’”

<sup>4</sup>Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup>Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region around the Jordan were going out to him, <sup>6</sup>and they were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins.

<sup>7</sup>But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for his<sup>[b]</sup> baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? <sup>8</sup>Therefore, bear fruit worthy of repentance, <sup>9</sup>and do not presume 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>10</sup>Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

<sup>11</sup>“I baptize you with<sup>[c]</sup> water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I, and I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with<sup>[d]</sup> the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup>His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

- **What one word, phrase or image catches your attention?**
- **And, how does this passage inform our boldness and creativity for building God’s kingdom? How does this passage touch your life today?**

#### Second Reading – The Message

<sup>1-2</sup> While Jesus was living in the Galilean hills, John, called “the Baptizer,” was preaching in the desert country of Judea. His message was simple and austere, like his desert surroundings: “Change your life. God’s kingdom is here.”

<sup>3</sup> John and his message were authorized by Isaiah’s prophecy:

Thunder in the desert!

Prepare for God’s arrival!

Make the road smooth and straight!

<sup>4-6</sup> John dressed in a camel-hair habit tied at the waist by a leather strap. He lived on a diet of locusts and wild field honey. People poured out of Jerusalem, Judea, and the Jordanian countryside to hear and see him in action. There at the Jordan River those who came to confess their sins were baptized into a changed life.

<sup>7-10</sup> When John realized that a lot of Pharisees and Sadducees were showing up for a baptismal experience because it was becoming the popular thing to do, he exploded: “Brood of snakes! What do you think you’re doing slithering down here to the river? Do you think a little water on your snakeskins is going to make any difference? It’s your life that must change, not your skin! And don’t think you can pull rank by claiming Abraham as father. Being a descendant of Abraham is neither here nor there. Descendants of Abraham are a dime a dozen. What counts is your life. Is it green and flourishing? Because if it’s deadwood, it goes on the fire.

<sup>11-12</sup> “I’m baptizing you here in the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. The real action comes next: The main character in this drama—compared to him I’m a mere stagehand—will ignite the kingdom life within you, a fire within you, the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. He’s going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He’ll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false he’ll put out with the trash to be burned.”

**How is God inviting you to change today?**

- **What is God inviting you to do today?**
- **Who is God inviting you to be today?**