

**15<sup>th</sup> December 2024**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday before Christmas (Advent 3)**

**The message of John the Baptist**

Isaiah 35:1-6,10  
Psalm 28:1-3, 6-7, 9  
Acts 19:1-6  
Mark 1:1-8

**Key Verse-** *"And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."* Mark 1:4

The third Sunday of Advent, also known as Gaudete Sunday, calls us to rejoice as the coming of Christ draws near. Yet, this joy is deeply tied to the preparation of our hearts and lives for the Messiah. John the Baptist emerges as a central figure in this season, urging us to prepare the way of the Lord through repentance, righteous living, and a readiness to receive Christ. His message is as relevant today as it was over two thousand years ago. John's mission was clear: to prepare the people for the coming of Christ by calling them to repentance and a transformed life. Today, we will reflect on his message through the lens of the Scriptures: Isaiah 35:1-6, 10; Psalm 28:1-3, 6-7, 9; Acts 19:1-6; and Mark 1:1-8.

**1. Repentance: The Gateway to New Life-** *Mark 1:4; Psalm 28:1-3*

John's primary message was a call to repentance: *"John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins"* (Mark 1:4). Repentance is not merely an acknowledgment of sin but a turning away from it—a change of heart, mind, and direction. John's baptism was symbolic of this turning, preparing people to receive the forgiveness and grace of God through the Messiah. **Psalm 28:1-3** reminds us of the despair and danger of living without repentance. The psalmist pleads, *"To you, Lord, I call; you are my Rock, do not turn a deaf ear to me."* Without repentance, our relationship with God is strained, but through repentance, we reconnect with Him as our Rock and refuge. Picture a bridge that has been neglected for years, with gaps and cracks making it impassable. Repentance is like the repair work that restores the bridge, allowing us to cross into God's presence once again. This Advent season, let us take time to examine our lives and confess the things that separate us from God. Repentance is not a one-time act but a continuous practice that keeps our hearts aligned with Him.

**2. Bearing Fruit of Repentance -** *Isaiah 35:1-6; Mark 1:5-6*

Repentance is not just about feeling sorry for our sins; it must produce visible change. John challenged the people to "bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matthew 3:8). Isaiah 35 paints a picture of transformation, where the desert blossoms, and the wilderness becomes a place of joy and beauty. This imagery reflects the inner renewal that repentance brings to our lives. Mark 1:5-6 describes the humility and simplicity of John's life. His clothing of camel's hair and diet of locusts and honey symbolize a life detached from worldly distractions, focused entirely on God's mission.

The fruit of repentance includes humility, simplicity, and a life that reflects God's priorities. Imagine planting a seed. If the soil is not prepared, the seed will not grow. Repentance is the preparation of the soil of our hearts, allowing God to cultivate the fruits of the Spirit in us. Are our lives bearing the fruits of repentance? This Advent, let us ask God to help us live lives that reflect His grace, showing kindness, patience, and love to others.

### **3. Paving the Way for Christ - Mark 1:7-8; Acts 19:1-6**

John the Baptist's mission was not to draw attention to himself but to point people to Christ. He declared: *"After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie"* (Mark 1:7). John's humility and focus on Christ serve as a model for us. Like John, we are called to prepare the way for Christ, both in our own lives and in the lives of others. Acts 19:1-6 highlights the transition from John's baptism to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, emphasizing that John's ministry was a stepping stone to the greater work of Christ. Think of a construction crew preparing a road for a new highway. Their work is essential, but the goal is the arrival of the main road that will connect people and places. John prepared the spiritual highway for Jesus, and we, too, are called to pave the way for Him in our communities. How are we pointing others to Christ? This Advent, let us actively share the message of hope, peace, and salvation that Christ brings.

### **4. The Joy of Redemption - Isaiah 35:10; Psalm 28:6-7, 9**

The ultimate goal of John's message was to prepare people to receive the joy of redemption through Christ. Isaiah 35:10 declares: *"And those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads."*

This joy is echoed in Psalm 28: *"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him."* John's message was not one of condemnation but of hope. Repentance opens the door to forgiveness, and forgiveness leads to joy. This joy is not fleeting but eternal, rooted in the assurance of God's love and salvation. Consider a prisoner set free after years of confinement. The joy of freedom is overwhelming, but it also comes with a renewed sense of purpose. Redemption in Christ sets us free and fills us with the joy of living for Him. This Advent, let us embrace the joy of redemption and share it with others. Let us be messengers of hope, reminding the world that Christ has come to bring life and light to all.

### **Conclusion**

The message of John the Baptist is a timeless call to repentance, transformation, and preparation for Christ. As we reflect on his message this Advent season, let us remember that repentance is the gateway to a renewed relationship with God, that true repentance bears fruit in our lives, and that we are called to pave the way for Christ in our own hearts and in the world. Through repentance and redemption, we are filled with the joy of salvation, a joy that sustains us as we await the celebration of Christ's birth and His glorious return.

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, We thank You for the message of John the Baptist, calling us to repentance and preparing the way for Christ. As we journey through this Advent season, help us to examine our hearts, turn from sin, and bear fruit that reflects Your love and grace. Teach us to live lives that point others to Christ, paving the way for His light to shine in a dark world. Fill us with the joy of redemption and the assurance of Your presence. May we rejoice in the hope, peace, and love that come through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. In His precious name, we pray. Amen.