

Possible Prayer of Church 🕊️ **3rd Sunday of Advent + December 14th, 2025**

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. [Possible Brief silence]

Heavenly Father, as we conclude this Advent season, keep our hearts and minds focused on Your Incarnate Son, who continues to tabernacle among us through His Holy Word and Sacraments; and guide us by Your Holy Spirit, that we might remain steadfast in the faith until His coming on the clouds in glory on the Last Day. *LORD, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

God of faithfulness, we rejoice that You fulfilled Your promise to send the Messiah. Grant that Your people may celebrate the birth of Christ by hearing the Word, singing Your praises and receiving His Holy Supper. *LORD, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

God of truth, as John the Baptist served as the voice crying out in the wilderness, so also pastors continue to preach Your Word of truth in the wilderness of this fallen world. We give You thanks for the men You have raised up for this holy task. Bless them and their labors, and continue to send workers into Your vineyard, that there may be a bountiful harvest. *LORD, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

God of justice, You establish earthly government and teach us to obey those who rule over us. Send Your blessing upon all who make, administer and judge our laws, that Your people may serve You in peace. *LORD, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

God of mercy, we are thankful for all those whose vocations call them to care for us in our time of need, including law officers, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, doctors and nurses. Keep them in Your providential care, and bless them in their duties. *LORD, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

God of compassion, You teach us to make our requests known to You so that we are not anxious about anything. Send Your healing hand upon the sick and the suffering, *[especially Faith & Our Savior Prayers List.]* Grant that Your peace will guard them in Christ Jesus. *LORD, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

God with us, in the blessed Sacrament we receive the true Body and Blood of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. Grant that all who come to Your altar this day do so in repentance and faith for the forgiveness of their sins and the confidence of their salvation. *LORD, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, **Amen.**

ADVENT-3A Matthew 11:2-10 WHO IS JOHN B, WHO IS JESUS? 12.14.25 F.OS.L

WHAT-A-CHARACTER What a character, **John the Baptist** is. No one really knows what to do with him. Eating locusts and honey, living in the wilderness, wearing camel's hair. He's **No Santa Claus**, that's for sure. He would seem to fit better as a character in a **Lord of the Rings** movie than as the forerunner of Christ. **But**, there is something about him that draws us. There is something in his character that says, "**PAY ATTENTION! I have something to say to you that REALLY MATTERS!**"

JAIL-TIME This same **John the Baptizer** was in prison at this time [of our Gospel]. This mighty **preacher** of repentance, this **prophet** who prepared the way of the Lord, **is in custody in King Herod's dungeons**. He had been put there for condemning the sin of Herod, who had taken his brother's wife for himself and was therefore committing adultery. Herod's wife wanted John killed, but oddly enough, the king had some respect for John. And so he had John thrown into prison instead.

ITCHY-EARS Jesus says here that John was **not like a reed swayed by the wind**. He didn't bend to the prevailing breezes of the day in order to become more popular and well liked. He wasn't a preacher **like so many in our time** who tell people what their **itching ears** want to hear, compromising with the culture around him. Instead, John preached the truth which God had given him to preach. In the end, through the conniving of Herod's wife, John would lose his head [*literally*] as a result.

APPEARANCE & MESSAGE Wearing a camel skin pelt and with the smell of locusts and wild honey on his breath, John had proclaimed by the banks of the Jordan, "**Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!**" That's how he prepared the way of the LORD Jesus, by telling the people the truth about their sin and calling them to turn from it. He said to the multitudes that came out to him, "**Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 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[!].**"

NOT-PC MESSAGE That may not have been the best church growth technique, to call the people coming out to him a bunch of snakes. But John knew that until the people had confronted the reality of their bondage to the devil and their fallen condition, they would not be ready for the One who came to deliver them from bondage and save them from sin.

US TOO The same thing is true **for us still today**. We too need to constantly hear that same message of John, "**Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.**" Turn away from our sin. Stop justifying it and making excuses for it. Acknowledge that we are helpless before God, despite our best religious efforts. And don't begin to trust in our own spiritual pedigree like the Jews did – Our family heritage or our long time church membership. Remember that God is able to raise up faithful children for Himself **from the STONES** if He wants. **It's not our doing but only by His doing we are saved.**

WITHERING US John cries out, "*All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it.*" **That's what we're like, isn't**

it? You spring up in beauty and strength for a time like a flower and everything is wonderful. But then comes the wilting and the withering. The wintry winds of God's mortal judgment blow over us, and we return to the earth from which we came.

WORD 4-EVER Our only hope is in this truth: "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but **My Words will not pass away.***" [<-*last* week's Gospel BTW.] And that everlasting Word of God declares to you that in Jesus you have full, free forgiveness and real, enduring life. The Son of God took your **wilting** and **withering condition upon Himself** in the womb of the blessed **Virgin Mary**. Though Jesus was without sin, He took the curse of your sin into His own Body and He broke the curse, putting it to death on the Cross. All the power of the devil to drag you down to hell, all the power of sin to condemn you was completely destroyed there at Calvary. You have been **Baptized** into Jesus, the Word made Flesh, and so you will live and abide forever in Him.

L/G : BITTER/SWEET That is the **ultimate goal of John's preaching**, that he might *point to Jesus* and say, "***Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***" Just as John **EATS two things** [with his mouth], locusts and honey, so also he **PREACHES two things** with his mouth. The locust is the destruction and the judgment of God's **Law**. But honey is the delectable **Gospel** of deliverance and release through Jesus, as written, "*How **sweet** are your Words to my taste, **sweeter** than honey to my mouth.*"

COMFORT YE John's truest message, then, is one of **COMFORT FOR YOU**, as **Isaiah** says [chapter 40] about this John, "***Speak COMFORT to Jerusalem, and cry out to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord's hand DOUBLE for all her sins.***" [Did you hear that?] Our LORD doesn't provide just enough forgiveness, but **double** forgiveness. That's how it is with the Gospel – it lavishes on you more forgiveness than you even have sins to forgive. The LORD is **wonderfully excessive** in His Grace, so that you may know that there is no sin of yours so great that Jesus didn't atone for it on the Cross, no life so wretched that He could not redeem it. You have been given **twice** as much forgiveness as you need. Your cup runs over with Jesus' mercy. And you can be absolutely certain of this, as it is written, "***The mouth of the LORD has spoken it.***"

GO ASK HIM... In prison John hears about the works of Christ. And so John sent two of his own disciples to ask Jesus, "*Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?*" **Now WHY would John do such a thing?** Was he beginning to doubt that Jesus was the Messiah? I don't think so, though I'm sure he suffered some trials of faith as he sat there in the cold and dark of the prison. But Jesus praises John by saying, "***Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist.***" I **Peter 1** states that the *prophets search out their own prophecies* for their full meaning, especially in regard to the time of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow. The prophets did not always fully understand the words that God had given them to speak. So in sending disciples to Jesus, John is **exhibiting faith in Him** and a **desire to search out more** about Him.

FOLLOW **HIM** However, *even more than that*, I believe John sent these two disciples of his that they might **become disciples OF JESUS**. The time for John to have followers of his own **was past; his mission was completed**. The way had been prepared for Jesus, and now they were to follow Him. John himself said of Jesus, "***He must increase, I must decrease.***" John's purpose was *not* to draw attention to himself but **to Christ**. It was time for him now to fade from the scene and for Jesus to become the focus. And so hearing of Jesus' works, John sends his disciples to Him so that they may see Jesus' works for themselves and know that **He is the One to follow**, the **Fulfillment** of prophecy, the Messiah.

U 2 ! "*He must increase, I must decrease.*" That's true not only for John but **for ALL OF US as well**. **My job is NOT to draw attention to myself** but to do like John did and point to Jesus, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*" **A pastor is to conduct himself** so that all that is finally seen and heard **is Jesus**. And this **is true also for laypeople, YOU!** Through repentance **you** are to *decrease*, to **die** to yourself, so that through faith **Jesus may increase in you and with you**. Your old Adam fades from the scene so the New Man, Christ dwells in you to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. "***He Increases, I decrease.***"

HE DECREASED Jesus said to John's disciples, "***Report to John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.***" These are the kind of people that Jesus came for – not those who are proud in their own righteousness and self-sufficient, but the weak and helpless and unrighteous. **Are you** beginning to lose your sight or your hearing? Are your legs and your arms not working like they used to? Are you contending with some ailment or disease? Are you living from paycheck to paycheck? Do you feel unclean? Do you sense the death in you that sin brings? **Then Jesus is for you**. He took on your flesh and blood and **He redeemed your sinfulness and cleansed you and restore you in both body and soul** to the fullness of His Resurrection Life.

BLESSED R U ! And finally, Jesus says, "***Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.***" **Blessed ARE YOU** who are not scandalized by My suffering and Cross, who are not offended by your need to repent and to trust in Me alone to save you. **Blessed are you who, like John in prison**, are not caused to fall from faith by the difficulties and the crosses you must yet suffer but who continue to cling to Me and hope in Me. For yours in the Kingdom of Heaven.

KINGDOM NEAR Brothers and sisters of Christ, the **Kingdom of Heaven IS AT HAND**. It is at hand **not only** because Christmas is near, **not only** because the **Second Coming** is near, but because **the King Himself is at hand**. His **Body** and **Blood** are **here**, given from this very altar for you for the forgiveness of sins. Here is your Comfort. Here, "***The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the Mouth of the LORD has spoken.***" **IJ'N, Amen. SDG**

CLOSING [PRAYER] Now may the God of **hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in **hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.