

## Advent 2 2009

Because of the incarnation of the Son of God, the Babe of Bethlehem, grace, mercy and peace are yours.

NIV Luke 3:1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar-- when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Tracōnitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene-- 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. 3 He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 4 As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. 5 Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. 6 And all mankind will see God's salvation.'"

### **Prepare the Super Highway for the Lord!**

#### **1) Listen to the Voice of Your God.**

#### **2) Enjoy the Salvation of Your God.**

One of the complaints I have begun hearing is traffic. "I don't shop in Fond du Lac anymore – too much traffic." I was thinking about traffic when we drove to Eau Claire for Thanksgiving with my family. It took us just over 3 hours to get there. Why did it only take 3 hours? The highways! Everything was leveled off and smoothed for us to travel at about 65mph! Did you know that one of the 20 Greatest Engineering Feats of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the US Highway System? By 1917 there were so many roads that WI went to a numbering system –the very first of its kind and it was adopted by our country. William Durant, founder of General Motors, said in a 1922 interview. *"Most of us, will live to see this whole country covered with a network of motor highways built from point to point as the bird flies, the hills cut down, the dales bridged over, the obstacles removed."*

Without the Highways there is no way I could make that trip even in a day of travel. When it comes to getting from point A to point B we simply can't do without our highway system, making bridges, tunnels, smoothing the rough spots and filling in the low spots. How will our God be able to come to us? How do we get to him? Prepare the Super Highway for the Lord! 1) Listen to the Voice of God. 2) Enjoy the Salvation of your God.

#### **1) Listen to the Voice of God.**

Luke records for us in chapter 1 the birth of John the Baptist and then in chapter the birth of Jesus Christ the Messiah. Now in chapter 3 he goes back to John the Baptist and begins with his call by God to prepare the way for promised the Messiah to come and rescue his people from their sins. You might think that to prepare the world for the Son of God to come to his people and rescue them the Lord would start at the top and talk to the world leaders. Men like Tiberius Caesar, Herod the Great, Philip and Lysanaiaus were in power at Jesus' time. If you want more on those great world leaders just do a quick search online. Luke's point is the Lord did not turn to the influential world powers to prepare his people for His son and the world's Savior. The Lord sent His Voice to prepare the hearts of His people to receive their Savior from sin.

"I thought John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for Jesus to save his people from their sins?" Yes and well no. John the Baptist was a unique man while he lived on earth – he wore camel hair coat, ate wild honey and locusts and preached out in the desert with temple, cathedral or auditorium. But everything about him was to point away from the trappings of the world's way of thinking and doing. God foretold through Isaiah the prophet that God's Voice would prepare the way for him to save his people from their sins.

The voice of God is powerful. In the beginning God said "Let there be" and there was light, fish in the sea, birds in the air and animals that walk along the ground. When God spoke things happened. God's Voice is powerful and effective to accomplish his purpose. It does not return to him empty. But it is not some sort of magical incantation that no one can understand. God's Voice is not in a foreign language that we cannot translate. God's Voice comes to us so that we can understand. God's powerful voice brings a message for us to hear.

The voice of God came through a man, John the Baptist, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John's message, God's Voice, was both the law and the gospel. He prepared the way for the Lord by preaching the law. Upon hearing God's voice with its threats and punishments to everyone who breaks the law, the people's high estimation of themselves and their performance was shattered and laid low. They then turned to John the Baptist and asked what can we do to escape God's wrath when he comes? How can we prepare for his coming? How can we make up for thinking, talking and living as a traitor to our God and Savior? John the Baptist then could answer them with God's Voice, the gospel. The good news that through baptism your past crimes of treason would be washed away and whatever you are lacking would be filled – You will receive the forgiveness of sins through baptism so when your Savior comes he will find you prepared to meet him. God's Voice in a nutshell worked repentance for God's people. By listening to God's voice they turned away from their sins and high pride in themselves and turned toward the gracious promise of forgiveness in baptism that God gave them to meet their Lord and Savior.

John's baptism wasn't quit the same as the baptism we have today as given to us by Jesus. John's baptism prepared people to meet the coming Savior by giving them the forgiveness of sins. Jesus Christ's baptism that we have today prepares us to meet our Savior who has already won forgiveness for us and will return to give us all the presents he promised for his forgiven people. Both baptisms prepared sinners to meet their Savior by giving them the forgiveness of sins.

Sometimes in our life we do things that just don't make sense or add up. For example, my family knows that we need to keep the house clean for our entire Christmas guest list this month. So we clean up the house and work at decorating it for Christmas for our guests to arrive. I come home from my meetings and I find dirty dishes and overturned bowls of peanuts in the middle of the family room. It just doesn't make sense. Did the children or myself want to mess up the house before Christmas? No. So why did we do it? We have a split mind. As Christians we have a split mind that is constantly fighting against listening to God's Voice which is telling us to dig up and clean out sins and fill them in with my words of love, joy peace and compassion. The other side of our sinful nature is telling us that sin is acceptable, fun and advantageous. We lose more battles than we win in that war. We must realize it simply is humanly possible to keep ourselves prepared for our King to come. We need divine intervention. Thank God he doesn't wait for us to come to him. He comes to us by building a Super Highway of His grace through baptism, the Lord's Supper, the public ministry of Pastor and Teacher and His Word gives us faith to believe his promise of forgiveness in baptism and the Lord's Supper and his declaration of forgiveness.

## **2) Enjoy the Salvation of your God.**

One of the strange things about myself is that I like to make my own way. Growing up as a child, if some one told me to do it this way – I would try with all my effort to find a better way. If we walk through the woods together, I won't be comfortable blindly following your path. Maybe I have trust issues. Maybe I'm just stubborn or conceited. It has its advantageous and my life is always an adventure. But it also is dangerous when I don't listen to my Savior's Voice and instead go my own way through life doing what I think is best for me and not what is best for the Lord and His Kingdom, trusting His way for me and my family.

As we prepare for another celebration of Jesus Christ's birth, our Savior coming to save sinners, we are faced once again with following a path. One path follows the star like the Wiseman of old. Through the wilderness of this world of sin and its temptations to spend our time talents and treasures on our self, the Lord sends us a super highway of salvation. His voice directs the path of this highway, elevating it above all the hopelessness, pain and sadness of sin in the world. Another path takes an exit ramp from this super highway of salvation. Even though we have taken another route and exited we think we can still get to our destination. We say to ourselves, "I can see it still. It's due north up there. We can exit here and still make it to our destination, our salvation.

Look into the manger today, this month, repeatedly. What do you see? God has come. The Lord's Voice went out 2000 years ago and prepared the people of Jerusalem to receive their King and Savior. They saw their Savior. Sadly some at that time looked into the manger and saw him sleeping, looked into the temple and synagogue and saw him preaching, looked into the courtroom before Annas and Caiaphas and saw him silent, looked into praetorian with Roman Soldiers and saw him beaten, looked up to the cross and saw him stop

breathing, looked into the tomb and saw him missing and decided to go a different route and take the next exit off of God's superhighway of Salvation. They saw their salvation yet did not enjoy it and will never enjoy it. They went their own way. Look into the manger, follow His Voice, refuse the world's temptations to exit and think you can still make it to your salvation. Stay on the superhighway prepared by the Lord to take us to our salvation through the Babe of Bethlehem. "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, He is Christ the Lord."