

Gospel lesson

We turn today to the Gospel of Luke, as John the Baptist prepares the people for Jesus's ministry:



picture reversed from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/john-baptist/>

Luke 3:1-6

(NRSV)

¹In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tibērius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraēa and Trachonītis, and Lysānias ruler of Abilene,

²during the high priesthood of Annas and Cāiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zecharīah in the wilderness.

³He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,

⁴as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isāiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

⁵Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth;

⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

The word of God for the people of God

<Children's time>

<Hymn "Like a Child"

TFWS #2092>

Message: The Home of God



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/come-let-us-adore-him/second-sunday-of-advent-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/second-sunday-of-advent-year-c-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Our caring and loving Provider,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That as Your children, we may focus our passions and
desires on You, and thus inspire others to seek You
as well. Amen.

We pick up the "Come, Let Us Adore Him" series today
with "Passion":

"When we speak of passion in worship, we are not
talking about emotions run amok with no direction
or purpose. We're talking about directing our
hearts to God, whose love and grace inspires,
directs, and shapes our passion."

What is passion? <Let them respond>

What does passion cause you to do? <Let them respond>

Are all passions healthy? <Let them respond>

Some say our passions give our life meaning. What is the meaning of life? <Let them respond>

A while back, I shared a story by Robert Fulghum in which he asked a Greek philosopher, Alexander Papaderos, that question.¹



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/surrounded-if-you-like-my-work-consider-supporting-me-at-https-www-patreon-com-marekpiwnicki-19313117/>; credit: Marek Piwnicki

Papaderos described finding a mirror fragment, playing with it, and getting fascinated with shining reflected light into dark places that otherwise would never be lit. He saw his reflecting that light as a metaphor for life, that truth and understanding would only shine in some places if he reflected it there.

It became, for him, the meaning of his life, his passion. As Christians, I hope that our passion, the meaning of our lives, is to reflect the love of God for all.

¹ Fulghum, Robert, *It Was on Fire when I Lay Down on It* (New York: Villard Books, 1990), pp.175-177.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/bible-characters-prophets/>; credit: John Heseltine & Pam Masco

Malachi and John the Baptist were prophets; their purpose in life was to proclaim messages of God. Sometimes they gave warnings, filled with scary imagery – everyone will face the Lord, but none are truly ready for that: we must go through harsh cleansing and a refiner’s fire to be rid of our sin.

But they also reflected the light of hope into that darkness: God will purify and redeem the faithful so that they may live in the glory of God’s kingdom. Today’s responsive reading, known as Zechariah’s Song (sung about the infant John), praises God for the blessing of a new prophet who would “give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Apostle Paul was proud of the way that [those he had taught about the love of Jesus] subsequently shared it too. The light of the Lord was reflected multiple times, shining even into the darkness of prison.

So many people today are trapped in prisons made of sin. The only way to cleanse sin and free people is through the love of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. We know that we have each received some portion of that; we have seen God’s light in our

lives. It is our call to share that with others. How?



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/joyful-adult-daughter-greeting-happy-surprised-senior-mother-in-garden-3768131/>; credit: Andrea Piacquadio

First, we must prepare ourselves to shine with that glorious light: through prayer, study of scriptures, and communal worship, we polish all of our soul surfaces, all of our facets, to reflect God's light and love in all the dark situations we encounter.

Once prepared, we can help Jesus counter blackness of sin-filled hearts with the light of His love, that all may be renewed. What does that look like?

- † When we help others to think for themselves, let **them** find a healthy way to solve their problems, and then support them in moving forward without damaging ourselves in the process...
- † When we tell those whom we love about Jesus and the better way He taught us to live, then demonstrate how that is applied in our actions every day...
- † When we invite others into the family of God through the power of the Holy Spirit, such as we do in baptism and communion...



picture from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/come-let-us-adore-him/second-sunday-of-advent-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/second-sunday-of-advent-year-c-graphics>

Then we are sharing love with passion for God, light

that warms the hearts of others and kindles within them a passion to know Jesus better. So let us invite them as: *<South Otselic - Baptism Liturgy insert>*