

## 2nd Sunday in Advent      December 8, 2019

Year A – the Gospel of Matthew

# Living the Lutheran Lectionary

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.*

*An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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- ✦ **On Facebook through Messenger** in a discussion group shared by people throughout the United States, Kenya and Uganda. Contact Harold Weseloh on Facebook Messenger.



<https://www.agnusday.org/comics/250/matthew-31-12-2001>

### Hymn of the Day

**Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 344 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 63**

**“On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry”**

“Scripture References: st. 1-2 = Isa. 40:3, 9, Matt. 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:3-4 st. 3 = Ps. 46:1, Isa. 40:7 John the Baptist's announcement "Prepare the way for the Lord" (Matt. 3:3, a quote from Isa. 40:3) is the primary basis for this Advent hymn. Stanzas 1 and 2 apply that message to people today; stanza 3 is a confession by God's people of their need for salvation; stanza 4 is a prayer for healing and love; stanza 5 is a doxology. This much-loved Advent text is laced with various scriptural phrases.”

- [https://hymnary.org/text/on\\_jordans\\_bank\\_the\\_baptists\\_cry](https://hymnary.org/text/on_jordans_bank_the_baptists_cry)

“The hymn of the day for this Sunday is very specific to the season of Advent and to the ministry of John the Baptist. The hymn is “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry” by the Frenchman Charles Coffin, a scholar and professor. The hymn itself takes our Gospel reading for this Sunday from Matthew, with the reference to Isaiah, and sets the themes into five stanzas. This is one of those hymns that I’ve sung my while life without really thinking about it, and it’s nice to really dig into the depth of theology behind this great hymn...” Read more at <https://musicalcatechesis.wordpress.com/2010/12/04/on-jordans-bank-the-baptists-cry/>

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVHkMWwnGWk> The Orchard Enterprises On Jordan's Bank · OCP Session Choir Journeysongs Third Edition: Volume 8 © 2012
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uz0kFAwuWTY> “Organist is Mark Peters. The prelude for hymn 344 in Lutheran Service Book is from Hymn Prelude Library, Vol. 9 (tunes P, Q, R).”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9tEoGixqo4> [Robert Morehead](#) presents background material before playing the hymn.
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Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001  
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**O.T.**– “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse ”

**Psalm** – “In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound”

**Epistle** – “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. ”

**Gospel** – “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

**Isaiah 11:1-10; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), the same reading (Next week: Isaiah 35:1-10 ; RCL, the same reading)**

*“The prophet had before, in this sermon, spoken of a child that should be born, a son that should be given, on whose shoulders the government should be, intending this for the comfort of the people of God in times of trouble, as dying Jacob, many ages before, had intended the prospect of Shiloh for the comfort of his seed in their affliction in Egypt. He had*

said (ch. x. 27) that the yoke should be destroyed because of the anointing; now here he tells us on whom that anointing should rest..."

- <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc4.Is.xii.html> Matthew Henry, (1662 – 1714) "was a nonconformist minister and author, born in Wales but spending much of his life in England. He is best known for the six-volume biblical commentary *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*... Henry's commentaries are primarily exegetical, dealing with the scripture text as presented, with his prime intention being explanation for practical and devotional purposes." Wikipedia

## The Righteous Reign of the Branch

- 11** There **shall**\* come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch from his roots **shall** bear fruit.
- 2** And the Spirit of the LORD **shall** rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
- 3** And his delight **shall** be in the fear of the LORD.  
He **shall** not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
- 4** but with righteousness he **shall** judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
and he **shall** strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he **shall** kill the wicked.
- 5** Righteousness **shall** be the belt of his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.
- 6** The wolf **shall** dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard **shall** lie down with the young goat,  
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;  
and a little child **shall** lead them.
- 7** The cow and the bear **shall** graze;  
their young **shall** lie down together;  
and the lion **shall** eat straw like the ox.
- 8** The nursing child **shall** play over the hole of the cobra,  
and the weaned child **shall** put his hand on the adder's den.
- 9** They **shall** not hurt or destroy  
in all my holy mountain;  
for the earth **shall** be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.

<sup>10</sup> In that day the root of Jesse, who **shall** stand as a signal for the peoples—of him **shall** the nations inquire, and his resting place **shall** be glorious.

\* *Shall* - aux.v. Past tense **should** (shōod)

1. Used before a verb in the infinitive to show:

- a. Something that will take place or exist in the future: *We shall arrive tomorrow.*
- b. An order, promise, requirement, or obligation: *You shall leave now. He shall answer for his misdeeds. The penalty shall not exceed two years in prison.*
- c. The will to do something or have something take place: *I shall go out if I feel like it.*
- d. Something that is inevitable: *That day shall come.*

2. Archaic

- a. To be able to.
- b. To have to; must.

➤ <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/shall>

"We are now well into Advent, and Isaiah is once again painting his grand canvases of what the world of YHWH will be like "on that day." There is always danger when we read these texts, because they are overly familiar. To quote Meredith Wilson's musical, *The Music Man*, the words too often "slip along softly in the tonguest way." This means that we mouth them well, but fail to appreciate what they may have meant to the ancients and what they still might mean for us...

When this text was written has long been the source of much ink and many bites. It rests in the midst of 8<sup>th</sup>-century Isaiah, the prophet wrestling with kings of Judah hardly worth the name, facing an ever-encroaching Assyrian colossus. What would prick Isaiah to compose such words of hope and idyllic promise? ... He dreamed of something far better, and imagined that YHWH had that better in mind. "A shoot will burst forth from the stump of Jesse, and a branch will surge out of his roots" (1:11).

Isaiah begins his vision with a return to the old idea that the kings of Israel and Judah must, by divine decree, always be directly descended from the great David, the king by which all others are to be measured. Isaiah speaks his word some two hundred years after the death of David...

This new branch will have the requisite qualities from YHWH that will promise at last a kingship worthy of its name... In short, this new shoot will fulfill the call of the coronation Psalm 72 that prays that the new king will "judge the people with righteousness and the poor with justice" (Ps. 72:2). At last, calls Isaiah, such a king will come, though his like has yet to be seen in the land.

Echoing that psalm, Isaiah promises that "his delight will be (only) in the awe of YHWH," (because) "he will not judge by what his eyes see or decide by the hearing of his ears; (instead) with righteousness he will judge the poor and decide uprightly for the meek of the earth" (Is. 11:3-4a)... Plainly, Isaiah claims that kings too often have offered so-called justice to those who, like them, are rich and powerful. This new king will be different in every way...

- <https://www.patheos.com/progressive-christian/2013/12/wolves-lambs-leopards-john-holbert-12-03-2013> John Holbert

“And that peaceable kingdom where all God's creatures live together in perfect harmony? Not yet, to be sure, for this kingdom promises nothing less than a reversal of the curse of Eden's fall, putting an end even to the enmity between the human and the serpent (Genesis 3:15; cf. Isaiah 11:8). Such a possibility will come only beyond history as we know it, but we anticipate it now in faith because it is God's own promise. Though looking to the future, it had a present effect in the eighth century and can have one today as well. What if we chose to live now in the freedom of the promise, in accord with its pictures of God's future kingdom?...”

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=3](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3) [Fred Gaiser](#)  
Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

### **Psalm 72:1-7; RCL, Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 (Psalm 146; RCL, Psalm 146:5-10 or Luke 1:46b-55)**

*Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 is timely for the season of Advent. We come in these Advent Sundays to hear and experience the kingship of the Messiah, who has come, is present, and will come in power and glory as the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven.<sup>1</sup>*

*In Israel's history the king represented the ruling presence of God among the people. The exalted reigns of the earliest kings, David and Solomon, provided a way to an understanding of kingship that was not without faults.*

*Psalm 72 carries the title "Of Solomon," either attributing this psalm to the poetry of Solomon, or is expressive of the worship life of Israel, attributing to Solomon a king who rules in God's favor: "Give the kings your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son" (verse 1).*

*This psalm is identified as one of the nine Royal Psalms (2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 110, 132) that sing praise to the king as God's chosen representative on earth. They are prayers from Israel's worship life for the king and his role as earthly ruler.*

*The Old Testament reading for this Sunday from Isaiah picks up on the theme of God's kingship, identifying David's father, Jesse, as the root or stump from whom comes the righteous branch of Israel's kingship...*

*The closing verses from Psalm 72 serve as a beautiful benediction on the rule of the king and reflect the expectation the glory of Jesus' kingly reign as we continue to exalt his messiahship in this season of Advent...*

*Paul is citing Isaiah 11:10 from our Old Testament reading for this Second Sunday of Advent. This brings us full circle to the closing verse of Psalm 72: "The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended" (verse 20). In the pattern of Jesse's son, David, and David's son, Solomon, we see the way in which God's kingly reign and rule is present in the one whom we herald as the messianic king, Jesus, the Son of Man who will come on the clouds of heaven in great power and might..."*

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=3110](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3110) [Paul S. Berge](#)  
Emeritus Professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

## Give the King Your Justice Of Solomon.

- 72 Give the king your justice, O God,  
and your righteousness to the royal son!  
<sup>2</sup> May he judge your people with righteousness,  
and your poor with justice!  
<sup>3</sup> Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,  
and the hills, in righteousness!  
<sup>4</sup> May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,  
give deliverance to the children of the needy,  
and crush the oppressor!
- <sup>5</sup> May they fear you<sup>[a]</sup> while the sun endures,  
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!  
<sup>6</sup> May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,  
like showers that water the earth!  
<sup>7</sup> In his days may the righteous flourish,  
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!...

<sup>18</sup> *Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,  
who alone does wondrous things.*  
<sup>19</sup> *Blessed be his glorious name forever;  
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!*  
*Amen and Amen!*

<sup>20</sup> The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.

1. [Psalm 72:5](#) Septuagint *He shall endure*
2. [Psalm 72:8](#) That is, the Euphrates

'Psalm 72 is an expansive, generic enthronement hymn that was likely a staple of coronations in ancient Israel/Judah.

In the verses omitted by the lectionary, there are mentions of Tarshish, Seba, and Sheba (the latter, perhaps giving rise to the epigraph, "Of Solomon"), but for the most part the psalm - certainly as it will be heard in Christian worship today -- floats free of specific historical context.

In that way, the psalm serves a purpose similar to that of the "charges" that are part of our baptism, confirmation, or commissioning liturgies where the community rehearses what it believes are God's mission priorities for the life and ministry of the person being set apart.

Verse 1 sets the tone and contains the only petitions voiced to God in the imperative (with emphasis added through the parallel structure): "Give the king your justice ... [and] the king's

son your righteousness.” Saving justice is a trademark of God’s reign and must be embodied by God’s agent in the world.

The rest of the psalm is organized around a long series of petitions that begin with, “May he ...” The psalm asks that God grant the king -- and the people, *through the king’s reign* -- righteousness, justice, prosperity, protection (from oppressors), a name that endures, shalom (well-being), political dominion (through which all the world is blessed), and -- as a spontaneous response to these missional priorities -- the tribute and admiration of the nations.

The petitions *could be* in order of priority, but the effect of the psalm when read aloud is of an intensifying spiraling and overlapping of attributes. Verses 18 and 19 seem to have been added to the main body of the psalm; they are a benediction to God, a doxology that closes out Book II of Psalms.

Psalm 72 responds to the first lesson by echoing and supplementing Isaiah’s prophecy about the righteous messianic shoot from Jesse’s stump. The emphases are slightly different, but the gist is the same. The gospel reading then, might be read as a reality-checking foil to all that extolling. John the Baptist knows that justice and righteousness do not appear by magic or without cost; they involve winnowing, purifying, and comeuppance!...”

➤ [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1907](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1907) Henry Langknecht Pastor, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Great Falls, Virginia

### **Romans 15:4-13; RCL, the same reading (James 5:7-11; RCL, James 5:7-10)**

*“The second of three consecutive readings from Romans is designated for the second Sunday of Advent.*

*This passage is the climax of the broader argument of Romans 14-15 about the division in the community between the “strong” and the “weak” that Paul is trying to overcome. What defines the community that has trusted in the promise fulfilled in Christ’s first coming and eagerly awaits his second coming?*

*Paul’s answer, and his prayer for the community, is harmony and hope. As Paul explains, the past—both Christ’s work and scripture—gives shape to and encouragement for the community’s present harmony, which orients all in hope towards God’s future...”*

➤ [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=4297](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4297) Orrey McFarland Visiting Professor of New Testament and Historical Theology, Knox Theological Seminary, Thorneville, Ohio

### **The Example of Christ (begins at verse 1)**

<sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. <sup>5</sup> May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

### **Christ the Hope of Jews and Gentiles**

<sup>8</sup> For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, <sup>9</sup> and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,  
and sing to your name.” [Cited from 2 Sam. 22:50; Ps. 18:49](#)

<sup>10</sup> And again it is said,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.” [Cited from Deut. 32:43](#)

<sup>11</sup> And again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,  
and let all the peoples extol him.” [Cited from Ps. 117:1](#)

<sup>12</sup> And again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse will come,  
even he who arises to rule the Gentiles;  
in him will the Gentiles hope.” [Cited from Isa. 11:10](#)

<sup>13</sup> May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

“As was the case with Romans 13 last week, so also this week’s text from Romans 15 draws us into the double- or even triple-exposure of time that happens as the old year hands off to the new in the church calendar.

The beginning and the end come together as we enter the time of anticipation which will culminate with a backward-glancing celebration of the first arrival of the Messiah, and, one day, with the joyful reception of Christ at his second.

In between, we prepare. And, we strive to live as people of age-to-come. The conjunction of what God has done in the past, what God is doing among us now, and what God promises to do in the future come together to undergird the seminal Christian virtue of hope.

### **Scripture: Past, Present, and Future**

Romans 15 is drawing to a close the lengthy argument of the letter that has unfolded since Romans 1:1. There we heard that scripture was the source of the promise about the coming Messiah. Here we learn why it is that Paul makes such a big deal out to scripture:

“whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4, NRSV).

Hope is the present state of anticipating a particular future of which we can be confident because of what scripture has said to us in the past. But more than that, we can be confident because what scripture said in the past has also already begun to come true. The gospel of God’s son, the pre-promised Messiah, has come (Romans 1:1-2).

Scripture is reliable because God is reliable. That’s why Paul shifts from applying “steadfastness and encouragement” to scripture in Romans 15:4 to calling God the source of “steadfastness and encouragement” in Romans 15:5.

In Advent, we can anticipate the still-awaited advent of Jesus with firm hope because God has already brought to pass the first-awaited advent of the Christ. We are not simply preparing to celebrate Christmas; we are preparing to be those who are ready when Christ returns according to the promise of God. This means being the people of hope...”

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=3086](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3086) [J.R. Daniel Kirk](#) Pastoral Director, Newbigin House of Studies Fellows Program, San Francisco, California

### **Matthew 3:1-12; RCL, the same reading (Matthew 11:2-15; Matthew 11:2-11)**

*“In traditional theological perspective, the main purposes of Advent are to prepare for remembering (and re-experiencing) the birth of Jesus at Christmas (the first Advent), and to prepare for the second coming of Jesus (the second Advent, or the Apocalypse) and the final and complete manifestation of the Realm of God (the “Realm of Heaven”).*

*While Christians today have differing viewpoints on when, how, or whether the second Advent will occur, virtually all Christians believe that God is dissatisfied with the world in its present state and seeks to increase love, peace, justice, dignity, freedom, and abundance.*

*In Advent, the church thinks afresh about how to join God in the movement towards a world that is more like the realm of heaven. I can think of no better Advent guide than John the Baptist, whose instructions for preparation are condensed into one word: “Repent!”*

*John in Matthew’s Gospel is an end-time prophet whose message is that the time has come to repent because the agent through whom God will affect the transformation from this age to the next is now revealed: Jesus. A principal difference between John and Jesus concerns the timing of the movement towards the realm. John sees the realm as future. Matthew portrays the realm as already partially manifest through Jesus, though becoming finally and fully manifest in the future (after the second coming). Repentance is the first step towards joining Jesus in the community moving towards the Realm (Matthew 3:1, 8, 11; 4:17)...”*

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=3090](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3090) [Ronald J. Allen](#) Professor Emeritus of Preaching, and Gospels and Letters, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Ind.

## **“The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 3rd Chapter”**

### **John the Baptist Prepares the Way**

**3** In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, **2** “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”<sup>[a]</sup> **3** For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:  
 ‘Prepare<sup>[b]</sup> the way of the Lord;  
 make his paths straight.’” Cited from Isa. 40:3

**4** Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. **5** Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, **6** and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

**7** But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? **8** Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. **9** And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. **10** Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

**11** “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **12** His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

- a. Matthew 3:2 Or *the kingdom of heaven has come near*
- b. Matthew 3:3 Or *crying: Prepare in the wilderness*

**“This is the Gospel of the Lord”    “Praise to You, O Christ”**

“Following the genealogy (1:1-17) and a relatively long birth and infancy narrative (1:18-2:23), Matthew jumps ahead over the decades to the time of Jesus as an adult. He introduces us first to John the Baptist (3:1-12).

Then there are the stories of the baptism of Jesus by John (3:13-17) and the Temptation in the Wilderness (4:1-11). All this, in some ways, is a prelude to the actual ministry of Jesus, which begins at 4:12.

Many connections are made between the events and persons in the opening scenes and the chapters that follow. Among them, a connection is made between John the Baptist and Jesus as the Messiah. The book of Malachi had closed with a messianic promise, in which God declares: "Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes" (4:5) -- a day of judgment.

Since Elijah did not die upon the earth, but was taken into heaven (2 Kings 2:1-12), so he can be sent again. Matthew makes the connection between that promise and John the Baptist. For Matthew, John signifies the return of Elijah: "He is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14; cf. 17:12).

The Gospel for the Day begins by introducing John in the wilderness of Judea (3:1-6). Matthew took material from the Gospel of Mark (1:2-6), but he altered it somewhat. According to Mark 1:4, John was "proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Apparently unsatisfied with mere narration and indirect discourse, Matthew places the preaching of John into direct discourse: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (3:2). By doing so, Matthew aligns the preaching of John with that of Jesus, for the wording is identical to what Jesus says at 4:17..."

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1913](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1913) [Arland J. Hultgren](#)  
Professor Emeritus of New Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN



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"What do you think: Is there any chance we can reclaim the value of the word "repentance" this Advent? Or, for that matter, Advent itself?

Here's why I ask. I'm guessing that most of our folks assume repentance means saying you're sorry. Or better, that you're really, really sorry and will never do it – whatever "it" is – again. And, sure, that's a part of repentance but, honestly, a pretty small part.

As you know, the heart of the word repentance means turning around, starting over, taking another direction, choosing another course. All of those actions by their nature call into question the value or rightness of one's current behavior, but the emphasis is less on what is

wrong with what we're doing now and what is right and important and necessary about what we will do differently.

Repentance also underscores that change isn't necessary for change's sake, but rather that change is necessary because we've become aware that our actions are out of step with God's deep desire for peace and equity for all God's people and – taking Isaiah's vivid imagery in the second reading seriously – for the whole of creation. **Repentance, in short, is realizing that God is pointing you one way, that you've been traveling another way, and changing course...**

So here's my suggestion: rather than inviting repentance in general – which is too unspecific to be helpful – and rather than calling for a global-issue sized repentance, I'd invite you to consider asking your congregation to do three things.

**First**, ask them to take a moment to daydream what God's vision would be for them. What, that is, do they think God wants them to be and to do?

**Second**, ask your folks to choose one – just one! – element of their lives of which they would like to repent – that is, change direction – and name this Advent as a time to do that...

**Third**, then ask if they can identify one element of our communal lives that needs repentance and to think how they can contribute to that...

If we can invite folks to think of repentance more concretely and, indeed, engage in just two acts of repentance – one personal, one more communal – we might go a long way in redeeming not just repentance but Advent itself... *Slow down, stop buying presents, make time for church, don't get caught up in the holiday glitz. Do you know what I mean?..."*

<http://www.davidlose.net/2016/11/advent-2-a-reclaiming-repentance/> David Lose

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## How are you doing?

*Challenge yourself to produce a handwritten copy of the book of Matthew by the Last Sunday of the Church Year (Christ the King Sunday), November 22, 2020.*

It is 28 chapters long (1071 verses or 18,345 words, subject to the translation). Break that down to a schedule that works for you; a specific time or day each week, 2 weeks per chapter, or about three verses a day. Use a spiral notebook or a journal. Decide if you want a "Red Letter" edition for the words of Christ. Invent your own illustrated manuscript style. (Or you could commit to reading it)

**How you do it is your choice, actually doing it is also your choice.**

### Suggested Schedule

December Chapters 1, 2, 3 68 verses completed \_\_\_\_\_