



The Lutheran Church of Vestavia Hills  
"Prepare the Way of the Lord"

**SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT:  
THE PERSON AND PLACE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST**

December 10, 2023  
8:00 a.m. Worship Service



## THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF VESTAVIA HILLS

201 So. Montgomery Highway Birmingham, Alabama 35216  
 Church office: 205-823-1883 PreSchool/MDO: 205-791-5200  
 Web Site: [www.vestavialutheran.org](http://www.vestavialutheran.org)  
 WORSHIP: 8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Sundays  
 SUNDAY SCHOOL: 9:15 a.m.  
 Church Office Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Monday thru Thursday



PASTOR: The Reverend Michael D. Ahlemeyer – [pastor@vestavialutheran.org](mailto:pastor@vestavialutheran.org) text: 205-201-8866  
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TO OUR GUESTS: We offer you a warm welcome in the name of Jesus. Please sign the Friendship Register. If you do not have a church home, we would be delighted to have you become a part of our church family. Please feel free to speak with the Pastor about membership in our congregation. If you do have a church home, we pray that God will bless you as you continue your growth in faith and love.



SUNDAY SCHOOL Adult Bible Classes meets in the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall at 9:15 a.m. Children, Confirmation, and Youth classes also meet at 9:15 a.m. in the class rooms downstairs.



CHILDREN'S CHURCH and NURSERY Following the Children's Message, all children ages 3-7 are invited to Children's Church downstairs. They will return to the sanctuary after the sermon. A nursery attendant is provided for children ages birth to 3 years during our 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM services.



COMMUNION We invite all baptized Christians who acknowledge their sinfulness, trust in Christ as their Savior, and who recognize the real presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the bread and wine to join us at the Communion table. The practice of our congregation is to place the bread into the extended hand of the communicant. The wine is offered in individual cups; please take one from the tray as it is offered by the Elder. The common cup will be offered to those who do not take an individual cup. The cups in the center of the tray are filled with non-alcoholic wine, in consideration of persons who should not drink wine. Also, children who have not received Communion instruction are invited to come to the Communion rail, fold their hands and receive a blessing. Please notify an usher if you need a communion assistant to bring the Lord's Supper to you in the pew.

The Lutheran Church of Vestavia Hills

**SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

December 10, 2023

8:00 a.m. Worship Service

**PRELUDE**

**WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**OPENING HYMN**

"Hark the Glad Sound"

LSB #349



1 Hark the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, The Sav - ior  
2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, In Sa - tan's  
3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, The bleed - ing  
4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of Peace, Thy wel - come



prom - ised long; Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare a  
bond - age held. The gates of brass be - fore Him  
soul to cure, And with the trea - sures of His  
shall pro - claim, And heav'n's e - ter - nal arch - es



throne And ev - 'ry voice a song.  
burst, The i - ron fet - ters yield.  
grace To en - rich the hum - ble poor.  
ring With Thy be - lov - ed name.

## CALL TO WORSHIP

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Come, Lord Jesus. Come. Amen.**

## CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

"When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." (Luther: *The Ninety-Five Theses*)

**Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ He gives the power to become the children of God and bestow on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

## LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

~John 1:4, 6-8

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

**He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light so that all might believe.**

The true light, which gives light to everyone, has come into the world.

**In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.**

~Advent Wreath Is Lit While Singing Hymn~

### RESPONSE

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

LSB #357 (v.1)



O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som cap - tive



Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here



Un - til the Son of God ap - pear. Re - joice! Re - joice!



Em - man - u - el Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son. You sent John the Baptist into the wilderness to remind us of the bareness of our sin; and to remove from us the distractions of this passing world. Come, Lord Jesus, with Your grace to all the places of this world where people desperately need You; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## **OLD TESTAMENT LESSON**

Malachi 3:1-3, 4:5-6

<sup>1</sup>"Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>2</sup>But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. <sup>3</sup>He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD.

<sup>5</sup>"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. <sup>6</sup>And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

<sup>11</sup>For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, <sup>13</sup>waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup>who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**THEME HYMN**

“On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist Cry”

LSB #344 (v. 1-2)



1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry An - nounc - es  
2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin; Make straight the



that the Lord is nigh; A - wake and hear - ken,  
way for God with - in, And let us all our



for he brings Glad tid - ings of the King of kings!  
hearts pre - pare For Christ to come and en - ter there.

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark the first chapter.

**Glory to You, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

<sup>2</sup>As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,  
who will prepare your way,

<sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight,’”

<sup>4</sup>John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup>I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to You, O Christ.**



## CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Augsburg Confession: *Article XII. Of Repentance*

Now, repentance consists properly of these two parts:

**One is contrition, that is terror striking the conscience through the knowledge of sin;**

The other is faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution,

**and believes that for Christ's sake, sins are forgiven, comfort the conscience, and delivers it from terrors.**

Then good works are bound to follow,

**which are the fruits of repentance.**

## CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

## HYMN OF THE DAY

"Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come"

LSB #350



1 Come, Thou pre - cious Ran - som, come, On - ly hope for  
2 En - ter now my wait - ing heart, Glo - rious King and  
3 My ho - san - nas and my palms Gra - cious - ly re -  
4 Hail! Ho - san - na, Da - vid's Son! Je - sus, hear our



sin - ful mor - tals! Come, O Sav - ior of the world!  
Lord most ho - ly. Dwell in me and ne'er de - part,  
ceive, I pray Thee; Ev - er - more, as best I can,  
sup - pli - ca - tion! Let Thy king - dom, scep - ter, crown,



O - pen are to Thee all por - tals. Come, Thy beau - ty  
Though I am but poor and low - ly. Ah, what rich - es  
Sav - ior, I will hom - age pay Thee, And in faith I  
Bring us bless - ing and sal - va - tion, That for - ev - er



let us see; Anx - ious - ly we wait for Thee.  
will be mine When Thou art my guest di - vine!  
will em - brace, Lord, Thy mer - it through Thy grace.  
we may sing: Hail! Ho - san - na to our King.

## SERMON

### Sermon Series: "Prepare the Way of the Lord"

*Part 2: The Person and Place of John the Baptist*

Rev. Michael Ahlemeyer

## VOLUNTARY

## OFFERING

*~please sign the Record of Fellowship during the Offering*

## OFFERTORY

"The Advent of Our King"

LSB #331 (v. 1)



## CLOSING HYMN

"Prepare the Royal Highway"

LSB #343 (v. 1,3-4)



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; The King of kings is near!  
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen To greet your prom-ised king!  
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; It comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley A lev - el road ap - pear!  
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion Its trib - ute too should bring.  
His rule is peace and free - dom And jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of Glo - ry Fore-told in sa - cred sto - ry:  
All lands, bow down be - fore Him! All na - tions, now a - dore Him!  
So let your praise be sound - ing For kind - ness so a - bound - ing:

*Refrain*



Ho - san - na to the Lord, For He ful - fills God's Word!

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## POSTLUDE