

**Salem-Sauk Valley Lutheran Parish**  
**Order of Sunday Worship- Third Sunday in Advent– December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023**  
**At Sauk Valley Lutheran Church**

**Prelude**

Emily Larson, Musician

**Welcome/Announcements**

**Lighting of the Advent Candle**

“The First Noel”

Praise #188

**Invocation:**

P: We gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **C: Amen.**

**Opening Prayer:**

P: O Lord, our Maker, Redeemer, and Comforter, we are assembled in Your presence to hear Your holy Word. We pray that You would open our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, that through the preaching of Your Word we may be taught to repent of our sins, to believe on Jesus in life and in death, and grow day by day in grace and holiness. Hear us for Christ’s sake. **C: Amen.**

**Opening Hymn:**

“*Angels We Have Heard on High*”

Praise #179

**Confession of Sin:**

P: Let us bow before the Lord and confess our sins.

**C: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed. Therefore, we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.**

**Kyrie:**

*C: O God the Father in heaven, have mercy upon us!*

*O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us!*

*O God the Holy Spirit, true Comforter, have mercy upon us!*

**Absolution:**

P: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us, and has given his only Son to die for us, and for his sake God forgives all our sins. To those who believe in his name he gives power to become the children of God, and has promised them his Holy Spirit. Those who believe and are baptized shall be saved. Grant this Lord unto us all.

**C: Amen.**

**Gloria:**

P: Glory be to God in the highest.

**C: *And on earth peace, good will toward men.***

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: *And also with you.***

**Prayer of the Day:**

P: Let us pray together.

**C: Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

**Psalm-Luke 1:46b-55**

**First Reading- Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11**  
**Second Reading- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

**Hymn**

*“Magnificat”*

Insert

**Gospel Reading- Luke 1:26-55**

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

*C: God be praised for his glad tidings!*

**Apostles Creed**

**C: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.**

**Children’s Message – “Jesus Loves Me”**

**Choir Singing**

**Offering and Offertory: *We give Thee but Thine own, whate’er the gift might be. All that we have is Thine alone, a trust O Lord from Thee.***

**Hymn:**

*“Holy Child Within the Manger/Carol at the Manger”*

Insert

**Sermon**

**Pastor Lexy Carson**

Grace and peace to you from God the Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

If someone asked “Who are you?” What would you say? Well you might be caught off guard, but I’m guessing you’d say something along the lines of your name, where you are from, who your children are, who your spouse is, who your parents are, where you work, probably something along those lines.

Well in our Gospel passage for today, John the Baptist is gathered in front of the Levites and priests, the religious leaders and they ask him just this question, “Who are you?” And John gives the most peculiar answer. Instead of saying "while I’m John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, he says “I am not the Messiah.” Instead of saying who is, he says who he is not.

I’m guessing none of you have ever had a conversation with someone that has gone this way. Nobody answers a question this way. No one, when asked who they are, says who they are not. This is counter to the way our world operates. We are wired to want to be seen, to be heard, to be loved, to be known.

But John doesn’t. John is concerned about how he is viewed, portrayed and seen. He is not worried whatsoever with how people look at him, what they say about him or even who he is.

I am not the Messiah. That's all that matters, I'm not the Messiah. John is reluctant to tell anything about himself, he was not there to draw attention to himself, he's here to talk about someone else. To deliver someone else.

This strange way of answering this question of Who are you? Really says a lot about what John is concerned with, what he is up to. He isn't concerned with himself, he isn't interested in boasting who he personally is. He is interested in one thing, testifying to the light. He is interested in delivering the light to the people living in darkness, so that they may believe, that they may have hope, that they have something to cling to.

John is a witness, to testify to the light, not the messiah - this was everything to John, all that mattered to him was his relationship with the light.

The thing about light is that you cannot miss it. You cannot avoid the sun rising, when a light is left on at night in your house, you cannot miss it, when you go for a drive in December, you cannot miss the Christmas lights along your path. It is impossible to miss the light shining in the darkness.

So if you cannot miss the light, you have to be avoiding it. You have to be putting up the darkest curtains to avoid the sunrise, you have to avoid driving at night to miss the lights or shut your eyes while you drive but you cannot miss the light, the only way to miss it is to avoid it.

The light of Christ is no different, than the light of the day. It is impossible to miss the light of Christ, but you can absolutely try and avoid it. Something deep inside us, resisting and blocking the light, our sin, our guilt a piece of who we are that doesn't think we could possibly be worthy of the light or want to believe the light - so we avoid it.

It is because of this deep gut wrenching feeling of wanting to avoid the light that we need a witness to the light, to testify to the light - it is why John the Baptist was sent in the first place.

While it may seem strange that John doesn't want to talk about himself, to testify about himself - what he is doing is witnessing the light for you. To say, who you are at the end of the day is not defined by your name, by who your family is, by your job, by any attribute about you - in God's eyes who you are is beloved, chosen, and His. God has no concern for successes or failures, what defines you in God's eye, is your relationship with the Living God and this is all independent of anything you say good or bad about yourself.

We look for the reason God would love us. We look inside ourselves and try to muster up pieces that make up who we are that would be favorable, and looked highly upon when in all reality what matters most about who we are, comes outside of us, in who God says you are - beloved, chosen and his own.

The reason John was sent, was not to talk about himself or who he was but to declare I have come to testify to the light - to drag you out of the darkness that you are stuck in, to pull you out of all the ways you are trying to block to the light with. All the guilt, the fears, the sorrows, the anger, the transgressions you carry that are trying so hard to shove the light away with. I have come to cast them out.

So, who are you? You are not the messiah. What a load that is to take off your back. But you are called as a witness to testify to the light. Let Christ's light shine through you, so that through you others can come to believe. And any darkness that is in your life, that is trying to block out the light of Christ, tell it to get behind you. You've got a light to witness to. You are not the messiah, you are God's chosen and beloved, a child of the light, a child of the living God.

The peace of Christ which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

**Hymn:**

*"Go Tell it on the Mountain"*

Praise #176

**Prayer of the Church:** Each prayer will end: Lord, in your mercy. *C: Hear our prayer.*

### **Holy Communion**

P: The Lord be with you.

*C: And also with you.*

P: Lift up your hearts to the Lord.

*C: We lift up our hearts unto the Lord.*

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*C: It is meet and right so to do.* P: It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give praise to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, whom John the baptizer heralded as the anointed One, the very Lamb of God, calling all sinners to repent to escape the judgment of his coming. Therefore, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Your glorious name; evermore praising you and singing:

*C: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Invitation/Distribution

Thanksgiving-

P: The Lord be with you. *C: And also with you.*

P: Let us give thanks and pray: We thank you Lord God almighty that you have refreshed us with these gifts; and we ask you, in your mercy, to strengthen us through these same gifts in faith toward you and in fervent love for one another; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

*C: Amen.*

### **Benediction**

P: Now may the Lord bless us and keep us. May the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us. May the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon us and give us his peace.

*C: Amen, Amen, Amen.*

### **Doxology**

*C: Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise him all creatures here below. Praise him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

### **Birthdays & Anniversaries**

**Dismissal:** P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God! Postlude**