**Crossings Text Study Group – All Are Welcome!**

**Wednesday Mornings at 9:30 A.M.**

**Martin Luther Lutheran Church, Milwaukee**

Dear Friends: The text for the Third Sunday in Advent (Luke 3:7-18) is a continuation of last week’s introduction of John the Baptist (JB) to us. What we see (v. 3) is a JB who is very successful in drawing the masses, what Luke calls “the crowds,” ochloi. Evidently, they hear something worth checking out in what they heard from John last week: namely, that he brings a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. So why do we now hear JB’s giving them/us such a stinging retort? What’s JB up to, anyway?

Evidently, like people who ignore the blaring tornado siren, they/we are not really hearing the dire straits they/we are in. The “wrath of God is coming”! Like climate change deniers, they see no need to change their present course of action. After all, “we have Abraham as our father.” We’ve always being doing it this way. Isn’t ours a heritage of righteousness? “No,” says JB. And so now John blurts out the danger in no uncertain terms.

What's more, when they ask for details as to what's wrong with their lifestyle, JB actually gives them details. His general term is that they are a “brood of vipers.” What does that mean? They are like snakes in the wilderness waiting to prey on whom they may. To the crowd in general he says, you disregard the poor among you. You have more than enough. "Two coats" as a matter of fact! And yet, you do not share with those who have none. That does not sound like "loving your neighbor as yourself," let alone, "loving God above everything else." To the tax collectors he says: True, you have a job to do, but you cheat! You take more than you should. That doesn't sound like loving your neighbor as yourself. And to the soldiers he says: You also have a job to do, but you cheat, too. You extort, you threaten, and you are never satisfied with your wages, i.e., what you have. Now, isn’t all this viper-like behavior?

But the biggest mistake these vipers are making is that they think JB might be the messiah and that if they could only begin to “fulfill” his moral demands they would be OK. That's actually THE biggest kind of mistake anyone could ever make! That would be like a murderer telling the judge, “I won’t murder any more. So may I go on my merry way?” No. We need more than a moral reprimand. We need a savior, a forgiver. And that is not JB. But thankfully there is one who is coming who is. He will baptize not with criticisms but with unquenchable fire (the cross, to be sure), but also with the Holy Spirit, a new resurrected, sin-forgiving, life-giving Spirit. Watch for him. He comes with grace and mercy. Follow him -- and, yes, you will have a chance to survive the wrath to come. And, by the way, his name is Jesus

**Martin Luther Lutheran Church --**  9235 W. Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53226

**Wednesdays -- 9:30-11 a.m.**

Crossings has developed a visual model for organizing the message of a particular biblical text based on the simple idea of distinguishing law and gospel, God’s own diagnosis of what ails us and God’s own prescription of what heals us.  The model is useful for everyone, both those who listen to and those who proclaim the text, because it helps to remind us what to focus on and listen for in the process of reading and understanding a biblical text and relating or crossing it into our daily life.

Who: Anyone interested in studying the Bible – clergy and lay, preachers and listeners

What: We will learn the Crossing Method by using it on the texts that everyone will hear on Sunday Morning

Questions? Email me or call me at 262-642-6303

For more Info on Crossings go to [www.crossings.org](http://www.crossings.org)

I look forward to exploring the Scriptures with you together,

Peace,

Steve Kuhl

The Crossings Community, Inc.