

**Readings for Sunday, December 12, 2021**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent**  
**Woodbury United Methodist Church**

**A Reading from the Book of Zephaniah:**

Sing and shout for joy, people of Israel! Rejoice with all your heart, Jerusalem! The LORD has stopped your punishment; he has removed all your enemies. The LORD, the king of Israel, is with you; there is no reason now to be afraid. The time is coming when they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not be afraid, city of Zion! Do not let your hands hang limp! The LORD your God is with you; his power gives you victory. The LORD will take delight in you, and in his love he will give you new life. He will sing and be joyful over you, as joyful as people at a festival." The LORD says, "I have ended the threat of doom and taken away your disgrace. The time is coming! I will punish your oppressors; I will rescue all the lame and bring the exiles home. I will turn their shame to honor, and all the world will praise them. The time is coming! I will bring your scattered people home; I will make you famous throughout the world and make you prosperous once again." The LORD has spoken.

**A Reading from the Gospel according to Luke:**

It was the fifteenth year of the rule of Emperor Tiberius; Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip was ruler of the territory of Iturea and Trachonitis; Lysanias was ruler of Abilene, and Annas and Caiaphas were High Priests. At that time the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. So John went throughout the whole territory of the Jordan River, preaching, "Turn away from your sins and be baptized, and God will forgive your sins." As it is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

"Someone is shouting in the desert: 'Get the road ready for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel! Every valley must be filled up, every hill and mountain leveled off. The winding roads must be made straight, and the rough paths made smooth. The whole human race will see God's salvation!'"

Crowds of people came out to John to be baptized by him. "You snakes!" he said to them. "Who told you that you could escape from the punishment God is about to send? Do those things that will show that you have turned from your sins. And don't start saying among yourselves that Abraham is your ancestor. I tell you that God can take these rocks and make descendants for Abraham! The ax is ready to cut down the trees at the roots; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire."

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The people asked him, "What are we to do, then?" He answered, "Whoever has two shirts must give one to the man who has none, and whoever has food must share it." Some tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what are we to do?" "Don't collect more than is legal," he told them. Some soldiers also asked him, "What about us? What are we to do?" He said to them, "Don't take money from anyone by force or accuse anyone falsely. Be content with your pay."

People's hopes began to rise, and they began to wonder whether John perhaps might be the Messiah. So John said to all of them, "I baptize you with water, but someone is coming who is much greater than I am. I am not good enough even to untie his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He has his winnowing shovel with him, to thresh out all the grain and gather the wheat into his barn; but he will burn the chaff in a fire that never goes out."

In many different ways John preached the Good News to the people and urged them to change their ways.

This is the word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**