

Bible Challenge November 30 - December 6, 2015

INTRODUCTION

Forerunners and messengers advance the advent of our God. While John the Baptizer's voice in the wilderness may be the principal focus of the day, Malachi's prophesy could as easily herald the coming Lord Jesus as forerunner of the Lord of hosts. Finally all the baptized are called to participate in the sharing of the gospel. In so doing we prepare the way for the coming of the Lord and assist all flesh in capturing a vision of the "salvation of God."

FIRST READING: Malachi 3:1-4

The Lord announces a covenant with Israel. A messenger like Malachi (his name means "my messenger") shall prepare the way for the coming of the Lord by purifying and refining God's people, as silver and gold are refined.

Adventure Challenge: Malachi 3.

Explorer Challenge: Read all of Malachi (one of the shortest books of the Bible).

PSALM: Luke 1:68-79

In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us. (Luke 1:78)

Adventure Challenge: Luke 1:26-80.

Explorer Challenge: Compare the "mighty savior" described in Luke 1:68-79 with the perfect king described in Psalm 72. What is changed and what is the same in these two descriptions of ideal leadership? (Which leader might appeal more to voters in the 2016 presidential election?)

SECOND READING: Philippians 1:3-11

The apostle Paul was the pastor of many new churches. He writes in this letter about his joy to be in partnership with the Christians of Philippi. Listen to how tender-hearted Paul, sometimes a stern preacher, is with his friends as he encourages them to grow in love and knowledge.

Adventure Challenge: Philippians 1.

Explorer Challenge: Research (in a study Bible, a reference book, or the internet) to learn a little more about the congregation in Philippi and Paul's concerns for them.

GOSPEL: Luke 3:1-6

John the Baptist is a herald of the saving Lord, whose way is prepared by "repentance for the forgiveness of sins." As we hear the careful record of human leaders, we sense the spectrum of political and religious authority that will be challenged by this coming Lord.

Adventure Challenge: Luke 3.

Explorer Challenge: "A voice crying in the *wilderness*": research the meanings of *wilderness*, especially as a place or symbol in the Bible.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming give to all the people of the world knowledge of your salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Prepare the way of the Lord. All flesh shall see the salvation of God. (Luke 3:4, 6)