



## WEPC Lectionary Project: *Union with Christ*

West End Presbyterian Church is using the Scripture readings recommended by the Revised Common Lectionary as a framework for our corporate worship and our personal and family devotion. This project is part of WEPC's 25th Anniversary Year and will run from December 2018 through December 2019. The Lectionary gives us access to the whole counsel of Scripture and these texts are a means for us to grow in our understanding of our union with Christ.

To learn more and subscribe to a daily email of Daily Scripture Readings, visit [www.wepc.org/lectionary](http://www.wepc.org/lectionary).

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### Sunday, December 8, 2019

*Second Sunday of Advent*

[Isaiah 11:1-10](#) *Glorious*

[Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19](#) *Wondrous*

[Romans 15:4-13](#) *Abound in Hope*

[Matthew 3:1-12](#) *Prepare the Way*

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### Monday, December 9

[Psalm 21](#) *His Glory is Great*

[Isaiah 24:1-16a](#) *Judgment on the Whole Earth*

[I Thessalonians 4:1-12](#) *The Lord is an Avenger*

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### Tuesday, December 10

[Psalm 21](#) *His Glory is Great*

[Isaiah 41:14-20](#) *See & Understand*

[Romans 15:14-21](#) *See & Understand*

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### Wednesday, December 11

[Psalm 21](#) *His Glory is Great*

[Genesis 15:1-18](#) *To Your Offspring*

[Matthew 12:33-37](#) *A Tree Is Known by Its Fruit*

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### Thursday, December 12

[Psalm 146:5-10](#) *The LORD will Reign Forever*

[Ruth 1:6-18](#) *Yours & Mine*

[II Peter 3:1-10](#) *The Day of the Lord Will Come*

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### Friday, December 13

[Psalm 146:5-10](#) *The LORD will Reign Forever*

[Ruth 4:13-17](#) *Redeemer*

[II Peter 3:11-18](#) *We Are Waiting*

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### Saturday, December 14

[Psalm 146:5-10](#) *The LORD will Reign Forever*

[I Samuel 2:1-8](#) *None Besides You*

[Luke 3:1-18](#) *All Flesh Shall See*

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## Prepare

This week, Pastor Steve Shelby preached from [Matthew 3:1-12](#).

<sup>1</sup> In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup> "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."<sup>3</sup> For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight.'"

<sup>4</sup> Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup> Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, <sup>6</sup> and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

<sup>7</sup> But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers!

Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. <sup>9</sup> And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. <sup>10</sup> Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

<sup>11</sup> "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

- You will not see many pictures of John the Baptist on Advent calendars, but in many ways he is the quintessential Advent figure.
- John Calvin called him the "lantern which shone in front of the Son of God".
- Lest we think John the Baptist is out of step with Jesus: "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel'." (Mark 1:14-15)
- "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3)
- At Advent, we should take a spiritual inventory.
- Often we view Advent as a time of longing, of unfulfilled desires and the hope that Jesus will come and make things right.
- So true-- and yet, Advent holds space for our grief, and it reminds us that all of us, in one way or another, are not only wounded by the evil in the world but are also wielders of it, contributing our own moments of unkindness or impatience or selfishness.
- Repent means to change, really to turn around, to reorient myself in another direction. Not simply to be sorry. We reorient ourselves toward the One who has come and who is coming.
  - First, John's very affect. His austere way of life, tells us comfort, the temporary things we pursue will not get us very far when we are judged.
  - Brood of vipers versus children of Abraham; what is our ultimate trust. All our doing, pedigree and 'status symbols' will not be enough.
  - But we need to ask a bigger question: three really, Do I want to do this? Can I even do this? How do I do this?
- I need a power outside of myself to empower me. The great news is God can change stones into children of Abraham. What if we lived in a world where God required you to repent but left you perpetually unable to do it?
- Don't confuse the "fruit in keeping with repentance" with "repentance".
- "And the crowds asked him, 'What then shall we do?' And he answered them, 'Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.' Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, 'Teacher, what shall we do?' And he said to them, 'Collect no more than you are authorized to do.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what shall we do?' And he said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages'." (Luke 3:10-14)
- Repentance itself is, first of all, looking to Jesus.
  - All of this is from Him.
  - Even John is from Him, "There was a man who came from God; his name was John...he himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light" (John 1:6,8).
  - Keep trusting the One who keeps you trusting.
  - Keep repenting to the One who keeps you repenting.