



## **"Stir Up Our Voices"**

Second Sunday of Advent  
Saturday & Sunday, December 8-9, 2018

All Services

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Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Luke 3:1-6

Do you remember your baptism? Do you remember hearing the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?" Do you remember the feeling of that water as it flowed off your head? For many of us, we probably don't. Many of us were baptized as infants or as toddlers. Baptisms are my favorite part of my role as pastor. There is nothing like being a voice for God as I pour water on someone's head and proclaim them God's beloved.

But if I'm being honest, I'm a little jealous of people who remember their baptismal moment. I'm jealous of people who can close their eyes and reimagine the moment that changed their lives, the moment in which they literally took the plunge, jumped in with both feet, and trusted the promises of God wholeheartedly. Why am I telling you this? Because in our reading for today, John the Baptist comes "proclaiming a baptism of repentance." And the meaning behind this phrase has everything to do with my jealousy.

Repentance – if we take that word apart – means 'to turn around' or 'to change one's mind.' Now this changing of one's mind isn't like when you go to a restaurant and change your meal order. This change isn't something to shrug off... "Oh, I changed my mind."

This is a radical change, a big deal. In the words of Eugene Peterson, who translated the Bible into *The Message*, this is "a baptism of life-change." Something that is so different, it is life-changing! John is calling people to receive water, to be washed and made clean, and then in turn, to change how they are living their lives. That's why I'm jealous of those who remember their baptisms. They can remember saying, "This is it! I'm changing my life for the better."

But, the cool thing about our Lutheran theology is baptism isn't a one-time deal. As Lutherans, we believe that our baptisms matter every day of our lives. We believe that we are continually trying to live into our baptismal identity. We are dying to sin every day and we are forgiven every day. All the baptized have a chance to remember our baptisms every day. When we take a shower, when we wash our hands, any time we touch water, we have an opportunity to remember that life-changing moment. All the baptized are also called to remember what this baptism of life-change means for how we live our lives. Baptism should be life-changing because it changes how we view ourselves and how we view others.

Now that's where our theme for today comes into play: Stir up our voices. As the baptized, we live knowing we have received the grace and love of God. And having received this grace and love, we share it with others. Showing love and giving grace like God has done for us.

Today, we ask God to stir up our voices so we might live a baptism of life-change! Stir up our voices so they proclaim God's love and God's grace.

Stir up our voices so that our voices echo the voice of God – the voice that spoke humanity into being. The voice that called creation, “good.” The voice that spoke to Moses and said, “You are enough. I will be with you.” The voice that proclaims love and forgiveness to all people! The voice that claims every human being as a beloved child of God. The voice that spoke the Word into flesh, the Word that dwelt among us. The voice that called John to proclaim the good news of the coming of the Messiah and the voice that calls us as well.

Stir up our voices so that our voices sound like God's. How might God be calling you to use your voice?

Friends and people of God, sometimes I am disappointed and saddened, heartbroken and angry by the voices that I hear in this world. And I imagine you are as well.

Our world is full of voices that speak hate. Our world is full of voices that speak hurt. Our world is full of voices that speak violence. Our world is full of voices that speak exclusion. Our world is full of voices that speak division.

I know they say, “actions speak louder than words.” But our words matter, people of God. What we say and how we say it matters. I know they say, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” That's just not true. Our actions have consequences, but so do our words.

And yes, we are human. We don't always get it right. We mess up, and God does still love us. But with repentance, with this life-change God asks us to name where we've messed up. That's why we confess our sins every week. We confess, we receive forgiveness, and we try to do better.

In this Advent time, God is calling us, the baptized, the receivers of grace and love, to use our voices. In this time, God is calling us to take seriously our baptism of repentance, our baptism of life-change. God is calling us to change how we live our lives. God is calling us to use our voices – shout if we must – to speak love, kindness, peace, inclusion and unity into our world. Our world so desperately needs it!

You've heard the phrase “What would Jesus do?” WWJD? How about “What would Jesus say?” WWJS? What would God say?

Our God is love. God's voice would proclaim love.

Our God is full of grace. God's voice would speak grace.

Our God is forgiving. God's voice would declare forgiveness.

That is what our voices should speak as well. Love, grace, forgiveness. That's what God's voice speaks. That's what God's voice sounds like.

Now imagine if all the voices in our world sounded like God's.

Stir up our voices. Amen.

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