

Matthew 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” ³This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.’ ”

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

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Therefore, bear fruit worthy of repentance, ⁹and do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I, and I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Call to Worship and Confession

Our world and our lives are not all that they should be. We fall short of reflecting the image of God and being the hands and feet of Christ to the world.

Let us confess our sin, confident that God hears the cries of a sinner who repents.

Father, you know that we have sinned. You know that we have hurt each other, been unkind and thought only of ourselves.

You have given us such grace and mercy; help us to extend the same to our brothers and sisters. Free us from holding grudges, from gossip, from passing judgment.

Let us never pour shame upon another, but instead love and peace. Help us walk with each other towards forgiveness and restoration.

Thank you for the beauty you will bring to our relationships because we have sought your healing. We are yours, Father. Amen

Psalms 22:23-31

- ²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!
- ²⁴ For he did not despise or abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
he did not hide his face from me
but heard when I cried to him.
- ²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.
- ²⁶ The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD.
May your hearts live forever!
- ²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.
- ²⁸ For dominion belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.
- ²⁹ To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
and I shall live for him.
- ³⁰ Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord
- ³¹ and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying that he has done it.

Romans 4:13-25

¹³ For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there transgression.

¹⁶ For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”), in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸ Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So shall your descendants be.” ¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), and the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰ No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²² Therefore “it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” ²³ Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone ²⁴ but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵ who was handed over for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.