

## ADVENT: WAITING WITH HOPE AND EXPECTATION

**Second Sunday of Advent**

**December 6, 2009**

**Malachi 3:1-4**

**or Baruch 5:1-9**

**Luke 1:68-79**

**Philippians 1:3-11**

**Luke 3:1-6**

### **Prepare the Way for the Lord**

Preparing is hard work and preparing the way for the Lord is harder. The prophet Malachi calls us to a time of preparation during the Advent season as we anticipate the coming of Christ. Malachi has good news—God will indeed appear. As a spokesman for the Lord, the prophet begins this particular chapter by saying, “I, the LORD All-Powerful, will send my messenger to prepare the way for me. Then suddenly the Lord you are looking for will appear in his temple.” (Malachi 3.1, *CEV*). In this season of preparation, we await the coming of Jesus into his temple – and into our hearts again at Christmas.

But, Malachi also has a warning: “On the day the Lord comes, he will be like a furnace that purifies silver or like stiring soap in a washbasin. No one will be able to stand up to him.” (Malachi 3. 2, *CEV*). In other words, the coming of the Lord means judgment.

That is precisely why it is imperative that we prepare for the Lord’s return. Preparing for the Lord’s coming is a matter of purification. True spiritual preparation involves repentance and change of heart. That is what getting ready for Christmas is about — preparing the way for the Lord’s arrival into our lives.

Like Malachi, John the Baptist tells us to prepare, but he also admonishes us to repair the path into our hearts. The crooked areas needs straightening and our souls that have been bent and turned by too many false hopes need to return to God. The only way for us to get our souls made right with God is for us to turn our hearts toward the coming Savior. John said it best when he quoted the prophet Isaiah, saying, “Get the road ready for the Lord! Make a straight path for him” (Luke 3.4, *CEV*).

This Advent season, may we have the courage to ask God to repair our hearts so that we are truly prepared for the coming of the King of Kings, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Tenny Thomas, a Ph.D. candidate at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary in New York City and who serves as a consultant for the American Bible Society in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Mozambique**

– With thanks to God for the centenary of the Tsonga Bible, for the impact of the *Faith Comes By Hearing* program, and for good progress with various translation projects, and with prayers that the Churches will be firmly focused on encouraging Bible use and that the translation partnership with the Summer Institute for Linguistics will flourish, and with prayers for flood victims and initiatives to comfort them through the Scriptures;

**Malawi** – With thanks to God for the Yao audio New Testament and with prayers that it will have a great impact, and with thanks to God for the new office and shop in Lilongwe and that it will enable the serving of people in the Central and Northern regions, and with prayers for the Chichewa Study Bible project and that progress will improve with three full-time editors, and with prayers for peace and stability in the country in the wake of elections earlier this year; **Madagascar** – With thanks to God that many young people participated in celebrating the 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the translation of Luke’s Gospel into Malagasy, and with thanks to God for the ability to set up a district committee on the Comoros Islands, and with prayers for the improvement of studio equipment and for Bible work in Mayotte.

**Activity Corner:** “Waiting for Jesus with a Heart Filled with PEACE”

Supplies needed: Bible; Bible Concordance; small notebook or writing paper; pen/pencil.

The theme for the second week of Advent is PEACE. Look up the word PEACE in a Bible Concordance and then look up several Bibles passages that contain the word. How is peace expressed in each passage? Consider keeping an Advent Journal to record your thoughts and reflections. At the end of the week, prepare a prayer that incorporates your thoughts. Share your prayer with members of your household during a time of family devotion.

Throughout the Advent season, gather with members of your household and reflect daily on Christ’s Advent – his coming on Christmas as a baby in Bethlehem, his coming to you each day through the Holy Scriptures and prayer, and his promise to come again at the close of the age. The Bible readings for Advent remind us to remain alert and faithful as we prepare for and await our Lord’s coming. If you are using an Advent Wreath, light the first two candles prior to the Scripture reading for the day.

Sunday	Isaiah 11:1-9
Monday	Micah 4:1-5
Tuesday	Micah 5:2-5a
Wednesday	John 14:1-14
Thursday	John 14:15-31
Friday	1 Thessalonians 5:12-28
Saturday	Psalm 122

Conclude each day’s reading with prayer and singing the first two verses of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” or one of your favorite Advent carols.