

# Advent



WEEK OF 12/07/25

PREPARED TO BE PURIFIED?

MATTHEW 3:1-12

## Silence (1-2 minutes)

Sit silently for a minute as a way to center your heart and invite the Holy Spirit to help you listen to and receive God's Word.

## Opening Prayer (2-3 minutes)

**Read:** Matthew 3:1-12

## Devotional (30- 45 minutes)

The holiday season is filled with excitement and anticipation for most people in our culture. Decorations, baking, holiday parties, shopping, and family gatherings fill our schedules to the brim each year, often with little time to reflect on why we're doing all this celebrating! All these things are good things, but they can divert our attention to the true nature of the season, that of joyful longing, of anticipation, and of preparation.

1. What are some personal or family traditions that you do or did as a child to prepare for Christmas?

Matthew 3:1-6 | "A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God'" (Isaiah 40:3). John the Baptist's life and ministry fulfilled this prophecy. He was the one to come before the Lord's appearing, and his arrival signals the first day of the last days of salvation history. John's voice means that the very next person to appear and the very next voice we hear is God's! But John did not come with a plate of holiday cookies and gifts; he came with a message of preparation, to ensure no one would approach the Holy Manger ill-prepared. He asks what we're afraid to: Who do you think this baby is? He is not just a cute little baby boy. He is the ALL-holy, ALL-sufficient, ALL-supreme, ALL-powerful Son of God. John comes to prepare us for the one who came to purify us. John preached the necessity of preparing our hearts for the coming of the King, and his sermon consisted of one word: **REPENT** . . . for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. We don't get the kingdom to come. Rather, the Kingdom has landed! The Kingdom of heaven is nothing less than the presence of the King!

2. Repentance is a turning from and turning to. It is not simply feeling sorry; it is radical reorientation of our lives, from unbelief to faith, from self-rule to God's rule. It

is a "U-turn of the whole person toward God". How does this definition of repentance differ from cultural conceptions of repentance?

3. Repentance is not a one-off act. As we walk with the Lord, we find ourselves needing to continually reorient ourselves. Why is repentance important in the life of the believer? How do you make repentance a lifestyle?

Matthew 3:7-12 | As John preached on repentance, people flocked to him to confess their sins and be baptized. But his tone changes drastically when the Pharisees and Sadducees show up. When he sees them, his first words are, "Your brood of vipers!" What caused John to react to their arrival so negatively? The Pharisees and Sadducees prided themselves in being sons of Abraham, and not only that, but experts in the law. They had clout and influence and believed all of this would save them. John challenged this belief, essentially saying "Your pedigree will not save you". The fruit they were bearing was rotten; they needed to bear fruit in keeping with repentance, not pride.

4. Vipers are snakes, and they can be so impatient to be born, they will "chew" their way out of their mother's womb. What does this imagery tell you about John's perception of the religious leaders? What does it say about their motives for coming to the Jordan to see John?

5. What do we tend to lean on or take pride in as believers today?

6. What are some examples of pride or dependence on self that can creep into your walk with the Lord?

**Our Big Idea for this week is this: Repentance prepares the road of the heart for the arrival of the King.** Repentance resurfaces the road of the heart for the arrival of Christ. Your heart has been called to be a highway of holiness. Do you make it easy for Christ to get to you? John's message to his audience is the same for us: **REPENT.** Turn away and turn toward. The way to prepare for the arrival of Christ is to turn to Him. Advent is deeper than Christmas. Christ has come. And Christ will come. Advent is the Church's wedding day countdown. The Groom is coming. And John the Baptist is the friend of the Bridegroom, shouting: **Repent! Get ready!**

7. Take a few moments to sit with the Lord and ask Him: What do I need to do to prepare my heart for You?

### **Closing Prayer**

Thank You, Father, for John and his message of repentance. We pray Lord for hearts of repentance. Soften our hearts to hear Your voice and fill us with Your Holy Spirit. Help us prepare our hearts for the coming of our King. In His name we pray – Amen.

### **Share Prayer Requests (10-15 minutes)**