

Sun., Jan. 2 - Holy Communion, New Year's Sunday

Memory Verse: "Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives." -Luke 3:8a

Reading of Scripture: Isaiah 40:1-5

Message: "The Son of Man 1: This Is the Way"

Text: "A voice is crying out: "Clear the Lord's way in the desert! Make His paths straight in the wilderness!" -Isaiah 40:3

Scripture: Luke 3:1-20

Blurb: We begin a new series in our new year, and we encounter Jesus as a 30-year-old man and "going public" in His ministry. John the Baptist points Him out, and this Sunday we commit to following Jesus for the year ahead. It's time to make our New Year's resolution!

Bulletin listing of the reading for next week: Luke 3:21-38

Prep: "Stations" with 1. bowls of water, 2. collection plates and 3. Holy Communion elements.

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor Andrew

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor Andrew

"Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives." -Luke 3:8a

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Pastor Andrew

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Forever Holy

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Live Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *Not Just Stories* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives." -Luke 3:8a

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Build Your Kingdom Here

Forever Holy

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Both Recorded & Live Worship]

READING OF SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 40:1-5

Isaiah 40 is a chapter where God speaks comfort to His struggling people. In this passage, God also foretells of when He will Himself come to help His people. This is the passage that John the Baptism quotes in Luke chapter 3. Isaiah 40:1-5.

1 Comfort, comfort my people! says your God. 2 Speak compassionately to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her compulsory service has ended, that her penalty has been paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins!

3 A voice is crying out: "Clear the Lord's way in the desert! Make a level highway in the wilderness for our God! 4 Every valley will be raised up, and every mountain and hill will be flattened. Uneven ground will become level, and rough terrain a valley plain. 5 The Lord's glory will appear, and all humanity will see it together; the Lord's mouth has commanded it."

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE: "Your Father" -Pastors Andrew & David

MESSAGE: The Son of Man (Luke 3-6) 1: "This Is the Way"

PP#1: The Son of Man: "This Is the Way"

"A voice is crying out: "Clear the Lord's way in the desert! Make His paths straight in the wilderness!" -Isaiah 40:3

Happy New Year! We began a new year yesterday. So, how are you doing with your New Year's Resolutions? Still on them all? Good job! We'll see how it's going next Sunday!

Here at church we've already started our new resolution. It's to read through the Gospel of Luke on Sundays together this year. Now we got a bit of a head start, with the first two chapters of Luke as our Christmas focus, as Luke tells us the Christmas story. Boy, have we learned a lot, right, church? Good stuff. We're in for a great year ahead!

Well, today we start the next series in Luke, looking at chapters 3-6. I'm calling it, "Son of Man." In this series, we see Jesus as an adult when He first begins His public ministry. And in public, Jesus often refers to Himself in this strange way: "The Son of Man." So, in the Gospels, when you see "The Son of Man," (or some versions put it, "The Human One"), it's Jesus talking about Himself.

PP#2: "The Son of Man"

Old Testament term/title referring to:

1. The way God addresses His prophet (mostly Ezekiel)
2. A lowly human being addressed by God (e.g. Numbers 23:19, Psalm 8:4)
3. The coming Messiah* (e.g. Daniel 7:13-14)

*Jesus uses it in this way for Himself

Jesus uses this awkward phrase in the public scene because it has roots back in the Old Testament. It is used sometimes to mean a human being. But importantly, especially in Ezekiel and Daniel, the phrase is also used to refer to the coming messiah. The Jews knew, therefore, that the Messiah would be God, as Isaiah 9:6 says, but also human, as the title, "The Son of Man" described.

During the time between the Old and New Testaments, the phrase came to mean “King Messiah” who would judge among the nations. So, when we hear Jesus referring to Himself as the Son of Man, He’s using this loaded title to make the link back to the Old Testament prophesy of the coming Messiah, who would be King and Judge.

It’s when Jesus “goes public,” so to speak, that we first really “see” Jesus. He’s been living at home for the first 30 years of His life. He probably learned carpentry—what we call cabinmaking—from Joseph, and at some point, He likely took over the family shop when Joseph died. Then, also at some point, Jesus feels the calling of the Holy Spirit to leave home and begin what He called, “My Father’s business.” We don’t know *how* Jesus discerned His calling, or how He even became aware of His unique identity as both fully human and fully God. But by the time we see Him in public, He knows He’s the Messiah and He begins to refer to Himself in the Messianic term, “The Son of Man.” And somehow He also becomes aware of His purpose to die for human sin as our sacrifice to restore us back to God. None of His self-discernment is explained, but by now in Luke we’re pretty sure the Holy Spirit had some major roll in all this.

So, we now “see” Jesus as He leaves home: transitioning from His earthly father’s business to His Heavenly Father’s business! And it’s at this point that we get to really start following Jesus, for He now starts taking disciples.

PP#3: *Mandalorian “way” image, like <https://screenrant.com/mandalorian-best-star-wars-quotes/>*

And New Year’s is the perfect time for us to jump into this part of Jesus’ story. For we are *resolving* to follow Jesus now this year, as His disciples, as we walk along with Luke.

Deciding to walk with Jesus means NOT walking in other paths. It’s a resolution to a specific way of life. *The Mandalorian*, “This is the way.” Not that way. Or that way. This way. We live differently. Our 2022 resolution is to walk as disciples of Jesus, walking the way of Jesus. “This is the way.”

PP#4: *Images of both the Madalorian and John the Baptist, subtitled, “This is the way!” in the Star Wars font like Slide #3.*

When Luke began telling his spiritual biography of Jesus, he started with the figure of John the Baptist, remember? Back in Luke 1 we learned that John was the promised Elijah figure who would come before the Messiah and whose role it was to point out the Messiah. If you want to see who the Savior is, watch John...he’ll tell you. So now, as Luke tells about Jesus beginning His public ministry, again Luke begins with John. Before we walk with Jesus, we watch John.

PP#5: Luke 3:1-20 (CEB)

1 In the fifteenth year of the rule of the emperor Tiberius—when Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea and Herod [Antipas] was ruler [tetrarch] over Galilee, his brother [Herod] Philip was ruler [tetrarch] over Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was ruler [tetrarch] over Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—God’s word came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

Turn to Luke 3. Once again, Luke sets the whole narrative in its wider historical setting. This is just like Luke 1:5 and 2:1. Luke is doing this to validate the story as authentic, reliable and historical. He sets it up under the Roman Emperor and the local Roman and Jewish leaders. Chapter

3, verse 1, “In the fifteenth year of the rule of the emperor Tiberius [draw a line to this verse and write a note, “A.D. 26”]—when Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea [Luke is using the term more generally, for his technical title in Roman terms was “Prefect,” which has more of a military command function. We’ll come back to him at Jesus’ crucifixion.] and Herod [Antipas] was ruler [the word here is “tetrarch”] over Galilee, his brother [Herod] Philip was ruler [again “tetrarch”] over Ituraea [it-you-REE-ah] and Trachonitis [trak-uh-NIGH-tuhs], and Lysanias [lih-SAY-nih-uhs] was ruler [“tetrarch”] over Abilene [ab-uh-LEE-nee], ...”

Pause there a moment. Remember I said that the Roman Empire allowed small kingdoms to function within it, provided Rome appointed the kings and they submitted to the Roman emperors and governors? It was a weird political environment in Israel, weird and very uneasy...and ultimately it broke down. More on that next summer. But let me try to explain the complex Jewish rulers. If you’re not the historical type, you can check out for a minute. Think about the rest of your day, your lunch. I mean, let’s be honest, you’re going to do that, aren’t you?! So, for those who care...

PP#6: 2nd map (“Early Reign”) from <https://brewminate.com/ancient-israels-herodian-dynasty/>

Remember King Herod back in Luke 2? Well, that was Herod the Great. He died shortly after Jesus was born, in 4 B.C. Upon his death, Rome broke up his kingdom into three parts and gave a part to three of his sons, calling them “tetrarch” rather than monarch/king. The dark green area around Jerusalem is called “Judea” and was ruled first by Herod’s son, Herod Archelaus, and later by Herod’s grandson Herod Agrippa (this is the Herod Agrippa in the book of Acts, side note). The lighter green area is Galilee, where Jesus lived, and was ruled by Herod’s son Herod Antipas. He’s the main guy we want to remember in Jesus’ story. The lightest green area, to the north, was ruled by Herod’s son Herod Philip.

PP#7: Herodian Incest and Adultery:

Herod the Great (Of Judea/Israel)			
<u>Wife 2</u>	<u>Wife 3</u>	<u>Wife 4</u>	<u>Wife 5</u>
↓(son)	↓(son)	↓(sons)	↓(son)
Aristobulus	Herod Philip	Herod Archelaus (tetrarch)	Herod Philip
↓(dtr)	(tetrarch)	Herod Antipas (tetrarch)	(non-tetrarch)
Herodias			
	-Wife of Herod Philip (non-tetrarch)		
	-Seized wife of Herod Antipas		

Now, Herod had five different wives, and his 11 sons were famous for fighting and plotting against each other...and Herod even had a couple of them murdered! And just to make things confusing, Herod had two sons—by different wives—that he each named “Herod Philip.” Hold on to that. One of Herod’s granddaughters (via son Aristobulus), was named Herodias. Yes, the name Herod kept going! Well, a bit of intrigue: she married her half-uncle, Herod Philip—the one NOT the tetrarch. Now, for the scandal: Tetrarch Herod Antipas, the king of Galilee where Jesus lived, fell in love with Herodias, his half-niece married to his half brother. So, he divorced his own wife and simply seized Herodias as his own wife. Because he was a tetrarch, and his half-brother Herod Philip was not, Herod Philip couldn’t do anything about it. In a minute, however, we’ll see that John the Baptist, preaching out in the desert, publically condemned King Herod Antipas’ seizing of Herodias and taking her as his wife.

PP#8: Luke 3:1-20 (CEB)

1 In the fifteenth year of the rule of the emperor Tiberius—when Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea and Herod was ruler [tetrarch] over Galilee, his brother Philip was ruler [tetrarch] over Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was ruler [tetrarch] over Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—God’s word came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

But let’s go back to Luke 3, verse 2, and see the rest of the historical setting. Luke records who was serving as the Jewish High Priest in the Temple in Jerusalem, “during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas [Annas was High Priest for eight years, but remained the most powerful priest during the terms of the following priests, including his son-in-law Caiaphas]—God’s word came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.”

So, now, everyone, check back in!! Remember, appreciate the details for they show the Jesus story is reliable and historical. In verse 2 we now see John out in the desert, where Luke had left him. Draw a line to John in verse 2 and write the note, “See Luke 1:80.”

PP#9: *Images of John baptizing (not Jesus!) In the Jordan River.*

So, John was filled with the Holy Spirit and was called to be a special prophet to announce the coming of the savior. To do that, John called people back to the way God wanted His people to live. Some of them had grown lax. Some had become worldly. Some had made the Jewish Law their focus and became legalistic and self-righteous. Some didn’t care in the least. Any of these remind you of yourself? Well, John stayed out in the wilderness around Jerusalem calling people to repentance. Make a note to verse 3 and say “John preached repentance.” That means turn around. Stop and turn away from doing what’s wrong. Choose more of God. Turn toward God. Sounds like a good New Year’s resolution! And...can you see a preparation here for the Savior God is sending?

PP#10: Luke 3:1-20 (CEB)

3 John went throughout the region of the Jordan River, calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. 4 This is just as it was written in the scroll of the words of Isaiah the prophet, A voice crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way for the Lord; make His paths straight. 5 Every valley will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be leveled. The crooked will be made straight and the rough places made smooth. 6 All humanity will see God’s salvation.” [Isaiah 40:3-5]

Verse 3, “John went throughout the region of the Jordan River, calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins.” John’s baptism was a sign of repentance, asking God to clean off your sins and worldly way of life. This is different than Christian baptism, mind you. John’s baptism was just the first half: the desire to be washed clean and be made ready for God. Christian baptism adds dying to sin and the old self, being raised in new life and being filled by the Holy Spirit. It’s an inner transformation and being made new. Draw a line from the word “baptized” in verse 3 and connect it also to the note of “repentance” you just made in your margin.

Verse 4, “This is just as it was written in the scroll of the words of Isaiah the prophet, [Again, Luke’s done his research...prophecy fulfilled!] A voice crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way for the Lord; make His paths straight. 5 Every valley will be filled, and every mountain and hill

will be leveled. The crooked will be made straight and the rough places made smooth. 6 All humanity will see God's salvation."

The wilderness is where you strip away all the stuff of the world that entangles you, and you can focus better on God. Prepare! Get ready! God is coming! "You better watch out, you better not cry, you better not pout, I'm telling you why: [The Lord Most High] is coming to town!"

In the ancient world, when a king would visit a region, they would repair the road before he came. John is saying, become ready for your King's coming. He's on His way! He will make your paths straight! He will show you how to live differently, how to live His way. He will straighten you up, straighten you out, fix up your valleys and pits, level out your lives. And notice, ALL humanity will see God's salvation! The Savior is for ALL people...Jews, yes, but Luke also takes care to include that it also means non-Jews!

John is calling God's people to God's way. *This is the way!* And he is calling all who hear him—including us!—to respond back, "Yes, this is the way!" and choose to walk it.

PP#11: Luke 3:1-20 (CEB)

7 Then John said to the crowds who came to be baptized by him, "You children of snakes! Who warned you to escape from the angry judgment that is coming soon? 8 Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives. And don't even think about saying to yourselves, Abraham is our father. I tell you that God is able to raise up Abraham's children from these stones. 9 The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be chopped down and tossed into the fire."

Many in the crowds who came out to hear him were eager to jump into the excitement of being a part of God's new thing. But John is a fiery preacher, who sees right through their shallow, impulse response that's not backed up by serious and lasting conviction—all into the emotionalism and hype of the moment but not serious about a lifestyle change. Does this strike you, too? Resolutions are easy to say, easy to start, right? But John tells them to dig deep and only commit if they mean it and are willing to sacrifice and go the distance. Verse 7, "Then John said to the crowds who came to be baptized by him, 'You children of snakes! [He wasn't trying to win friends, was he!] Who warned you to escape from the angry judgment that is coming soon? [John is saying, don't just want to avoid punishment. Instead, verse 8] Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives. [Live differently! This is the way!] And don't even think about saying to yourselves, Abraham is our father. [That you're safe because you're a Jew. That you're safe because your parents are Christian: for, God has no grandkids!] I tell you that God is able to raise up Abraham's children from these stones. 9 The ax is already at the root of the trees. [The coming of the Messiah is not all happy-clappy! You had better get serious if you want to follow God. It's not easy, and you had better be willing to change your behaviors!] Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be chopped down and tossed into the fire.'" Draw a line to this and write, "Real faith bears fruit."

PP#12: Luke 3:1-20 (CEB)

10 The crowds asked him, "What then should we do?"

11 He answered, "Whoever has two shirts must share with the one who has none, and whoever has food must do the same."

12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized. They said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?"

13 He replied, "Collect no more than you are authorized to collect."

14 Soldiers asked, "What about us? What should we do?"

He answered, "Don't cheat or harass anyone, and be satisfied with your pay."

What does this look like? Luke includes a few of the examples, helping us see how to apply this. Verse 10, “The crowds asked him [now, we are to put ourselves right here: we are one of the crowd at this point], ‘What then should we do?’ 11 He answered, ‘Whoever has two shirts must share with the one who has none, and whoever has food must do the same.’ [I have two shirts. I have lots of food. Do I share as I ought?] 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized. They said to him, ‘Teacher, what should we do?’ 13 He replied, ‘Collect no more than you are authorized to collect.’ [Seems obvious, right? But how do we live greedily?] 14 Soldiers asked, ‘What about us? What should we do?’ He answered, ‘Don’t cheat or harass anyone, and be satisfied with your pay.’” Again, *sounds* obvious. But *doing* it is something else. Are you satisfied with your pay? Or are you striving for more, never happy, chasing after worldly stuff? Time for a new way of living!

PP#13: Luke 3:1-20 (CEB)

15 The people were filled with expectation, and everyone wondered whether John might be the Christ. 16 John replied to them all, “I baptize you with water, but the One who is more powerful than me is coming. I’m not worthy to loosen the strap of His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 The shovel He uses to sift the wheat from the husks is in His hands. He will clean out his threshing area and bring the wheat into His barn. But He will burn the husks with a fire that can’t be put out.” 18 With many other words John appealed to them, proclaiming good news to the people.

With preaching like that, some even began to wonder if John was the Messiah. John clarifies that his role was to point out the Messiah! Verse 15, “The people were filled with expectation, and everyone wondered whether John might be the Christ. 16 John replied to them all, ‘I baptize you with water [cleansing only, repentance], but the One who is more powerful than me is coming. I’m not worthy to loosen the strap of His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. [God Himself will be poured out! And we know the story of Pentecost, how the Holy Spirit baptized the disciples when the Holy Spirit filled them as tongues of fire! Draw a line to “Holy Spirit and fire” and write, “Pentecost, see Acts 2.” John keeps going,] 17 The shovel He uses to sift the wheat from the husks is in His hands. [He is the Coming Judge, see?] He will clean out His threshing area and bring the wheat into His barn. But He will burn the husks with a fire that can’t be put out.’ 18 With many other words John appealed to them, proclaiming good news to the people.”

Good news? Does this sound like good news to you? It is, because it means that God is coming to put things right. Sin and evil will be separated, removed. Only what is good will remain. This is good news, as we look at our world and see so much sin and evil. This is good news, as we look into our own hearts and see so much sin and evil. We yearn for God to purify and restore goodness! It may be hard, but we need it! It is good news! It starts when Jesus arrives, and we know He will come back some day to finish it! Hallelujah! Come, Lord Jesus!

PP#14: Luke 3:1-20 (CEB)

19 But Herod [Antipas] the ruler [tetrarch] had been criticized harshly by John because of Herodias, Herod’s brother’s wife, and because of all the evil he had done. 20 He added this to the list of his evil deeds: he locked John up in prison.

But that doesn’t mean things will go well for God’s people. The different way we live puts us in direct conflict with the values and practices of our world. Not everyone likes it, for sure! Just ask John the Baptist! Let’s keep reading, verse 19, “But Herod [Antipas] the ruler [tetrarch] had been

criticized harshly by John because of Herodias, Herod's brother's wife, and because of all the evil he had done. 20 He added [even] this to the list of his evil deeds: he locked John up in prison."

PP#15: *An image for the cost of discipleship*

So, God's good way is not necessarily popular with the rest of the world. The powers that be can be powers against you if you commit to follow this Jesus and live His way. John was the first to suffer directly because of Jesus. Right from the first story, Luke is making sure we see that following Jesus isn't easy or brings worldly favor or success. As a matter of fact, choosing the way of Jesus brings conflict with the world, with the powers, with others who think differently.

Are you still wanting God's way? Do you mean it...mean it in a way that you will behave differently, live differently, in a way that others can see, a way that likely will bring you into conflict with others? Hear John's message: mean your conviction! Don't just declare it with your mouth, or good intentions. Declare it with how you live. Bear fruit in your life. Others can see and identify a tree by its fruit. Same with disciples and spiritual fruit. Like Jesus we are out in public!

PP#16: *Image of John the Baptist, seeming to invite us to follow, subtitled, "This is the way" with the same font as slide #4.*

This is a resolution that requires honesty about what you are willing to do, honesty about how much you need God's help to do it, and honest about what it will likely cost you. No false expectations here. We walk with Luke. We listen to John. And we choose to follow Jesus.

If you want to make this your way, and you are willing to commit—honestly—to living in this different way, or if you are wanting to recommit—to make this your resolution—to live Jesus' way, then I invite you to respond to John the Baptist's message like the crowd and mark your decision to live differently from now on through a commitment of repentance or a reaffirmation of your baptism of repentance, as we get ready to receive Holy Communion.

There are bowls of water by stations of Communion elements. There are also offering plates! Giving financial offerings to God's work generously is a mark of living differently. But whether you have monies to put in the collection plates or not, I invite you to offer yourself to God's different way. Prayers of reflection and confession are a crucial part of Holy Communion. Holy Communion is a declaration of choosing Jesus and His way. After our prayers, I'll invite you to come up to one of the stations. Leave any offerings you may bring. Then, dip your finger in the bowl of water, make the sign of a cross on your forehead or on the back of your hand, and commit to following Jesus. You can say, "I remember my baptism." Or you can say, "I choose to follow Jesus." Or, maybe you could even say, "This is the way." Then, pick up one of the cups of bread and juice and return to your seat. Whenever you are ready, take out the bread and eat it. Then drink the juice. This is a way that we commit to following Jesus and His way.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION/HOLY COMMUNION/OFFERING: -Pastor David

Prayers of Confession
 Words of Assurance
 The Great Thanksgiving
 Words of Institution
 Prayer to the Holy Spirit
 Receiving of the Elements

So, I bless you in the name of Jesus: May “the Holy Spirit work within you, that having been born through water and the Spirit, you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.” On behalf of John the Baptist, I call you, “Remember your baptism and be thankful.” (“Reaffirmation of Faith,” #12 and #13, *UMH* page 37.)
And on behalf of Jesus, I invite you to take Jesus and His way. “This is the way!”
Let us renew our baptisms and receive Holy Communion!

SONG: *Sanctuary* -Sanctify

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Wednesday night: Men serving Spaghetti, and All-Church Game Night

Next Sunday’s message: The Son of Man: Jesus’ Baptism

Read ahead: Luke 3:21-38

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

“Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives.” -Luke 3:8a

BENEDICTION -Pastor David

POSTLUDE -Sanctify