

## FROM LUTHER'S PRAYERS:

Graciously hurry the coming of that day. Bless and prepare us with wisdom and strength that in the meantime we may walk wisely and uprightly. May we joyfully wait for the coming of your dear Son and so depart blessed from this valley of sorrow. Amen.

## FROM LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM:

### The Apostles' Creed:

#### The Second Article: On Redemption

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended into hell.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated on the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

#### *What is this?*

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also true human being, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules in eternity. This is most certainly true.



*Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way  
for your only Son. By his coming give us strength  
in our conflicts and shed light on our path  
through the darkness of this world;  
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.*

## GOSPEL: Matthew 3:1-12

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup> “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” <sup>3</sup> For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:  
Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.”

<sup>4</sup> Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair, and a leather girdle around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

<sup>5</sup> They went out to him. Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about Jordan, <sup>6</sup> and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

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

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

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN ?

*Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*

Matthew iii. 3.

This, then, is the way made straight for Christ, and this is the true ministry of John, that he shall humble men and tell them that they are all sinners, lost, and condemned, poor miserable creatures, and that there is no life, nor work, nor standing so holy, great, and good, that it not under condemnation, unless Christ dwell, and work, and walk therein, and both is and does all things through His faith. And they all need Christ Jesus and should earnestly desire to partake of His grace.

Behold, where this is preached, that all the work of man and all his life is counted nought, there sounds the true voice of John in the desert, and the pure and full truth of Christian teaching, as Paul says (Romans iii. 23): ‘They have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God’, which means that man is completely humbled, that his pride is cut out from his heart and altogether abolished. And this may truly be called the straightening of the path for our Lord, making the rough places plain for Him, and making way for Him.

*Sermon for the fourth Sunday in Advent, 1522*

W.A. 10.I (ii). 198.

Taken from the book:

Day by Day We Magnify Thee *by Martin Luther*

Page 24