



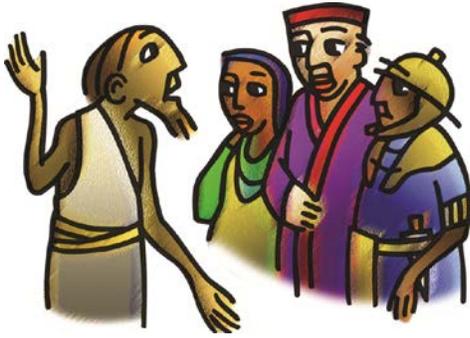
Mission Interpretation

Telling stories of our hands doing God's work

Mission Memo #444

December 4, 2018

Second Sunday of Advent (December 9, 2018)



Forerunners and messengers advance the advent of our God. While John the baptizer's voice in the wilderness may be the principal focus of the day, Malachi's prophecy could as easily herald the coming Lord Jesus as forerunner of the Lord of hosts. Finally all the baptized are called to participate in the sharing of the gospel. In so doing we prepare the way for the coming of the

Lord and assist all flesh in capturing a vision of the "salvation of God."

Readings

- [Malachi 3:1-4](#) - *My messenger is a refiner and purifier*
- [Luke 1:68-79](#) - *In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us. (Lk. 1:78)*
- [Philippians 1:3-11](#) - *A harvest of righteousness on the day of Jesus Christ*
- [Luke 3:1-6](#) - *Prepare the way of the Lord*

Your Kingdom Come on Earth

Luke sets the preaching of John the Baptist clearly in the midst of the political and religious environment of his day. We are told the names of the emperor, governor, and other political rulers of the day. They are the ones who are supposed to care for the welfare of the citizens of their territories. Although John gave his message while he was in the wilderness, it was intended to have its impact in the farms, villages, and cities where the ordinary and the powerful live out their daily lives. John is not satisfied with the way things are, and his words help prepare us for the coming of one who will turn the world upside down. John's words tell us to examine our own lives and the world around us. We should not be complacent in the face of injustice, but instead seek forgiveness and strive for lives that bear fruit according to God's vision for the world.

We all have the potential to "over-spiritualize" the Bible and our faith, so that they become disconnected from the real needs of the world around us. This potential

can be even greater in the days around Christmas, as we may seek to justify overspending on gifts, excessive eating and drinking, or simply desire to escape from the difficulties of ordinary life for a time. John provides a warning about ignoring the truth about our sinfulness and the brokenness in the world. But John also repeats the promise that God ultimately will not settle for the way things are in the world, and that God's salvation will be made known in the one who is to come: Jesus.

Gifts that give back – For Christmas or other times

Do you know someone who is struggling to find the perfect gift? Or is tired of shopping for someone who has everything they need? Encourage shopping ELCA Good Gifts and choose a life-changing, charitable gift – such as a goat or water well – and donate in honor of someone special.

Here is one example of many. When Marcelina and her daughters, Imelda, 12, and Esmeralda, 10 (pictured), received six chickens, it made a big difference. Before, Marcelina and her daughters could afford to eat eggs – their main protein source – only three times per week. Now they have eggs all the time and sell the extras at the market for additional income, which can be used for food and other essentials.



Gifts and more can be found on the [Good Gifts site](#).

Greenhouses unite Syrian refugees & Lebanese farmers



The war in Syria forced Mouhamad El Sheli and his family to flee their bombed-out home in Homs into life as refugees in neighboring Lebanon. "We moved here with no job ... meaning we didn't have anything," says the 28-year-old father of three young children. "I worked any job, olive picking, construction, any job so we can survive."

The influx of more than 1 million Syrians into

Lebanon, a country of just 4 million people that is roughly the size of Connecticut, has raised tensions with the increasing competition for jobs and scarce resources. Syrian refugees in Lebanon don't live in large camps, but are integrated in local communities, creating greater economic impact.

Thanks to your compassion and generosity through Lutheran World Relief, Mouhamad and his new Lebanese neighbor have developed an incredible partnership that is producing income and friendship — all by way of a greenhouse.

In another example Lebanese farmer Elias Daisy, 63, is looking forward to growing and selling vegetables the entire year. "This will improve our productivity, because the vegetables that don't normally exist in winter will exist with greenhouses," he says.

And Elias' partnership with Syrian refugee Mohamad Naasan, a 42-year-old father of two, has the added dimension of bridging a religious divide that has long bedeviled Lebanon. Elias is Christian and Mohamad, like most Syrian refugees, is Muslim. But that is of no consequence.

"I don't discriminate between Lebanese and Syrian, we are all family," Elias says. Mohamad echoes the feeling. "He and I are like brothers," he says.

[Click here](#), to learn more about this example. See how we can work together to build bridges in Lebanon and responding to other crises across the Middle East.

WELCA's Boldcafe: Why do the four weeks of Advent matter?



Have you ever wondered "Why all the waiting and preparation during Advent?"

Advent is a gift to us as people of faith. It is a time of the year to reconnect with the fantastic, surprising story of how Jesus came to be. Our worship, devotional practices, and rituals of daily life can take on special significance during these sacred weeks. Christmas will come whether we

immerse ourselves into the joys of these four weeks or not. The goal of this season isn't to acknowledge Advent because we must. Instead, it's a real opportunity to deepen the roots of our faith. [Read more by Emily Carson.](#)

Coming Events:

Date	Event/Activity	Resources
June 7 and 8, 2019	2019 MC Synod Assembly, Tinley Park Convention Center, 18451 Convention Center Dr., Tinley Park, IL	For more information visit http://www.mtselca.org/assembly/
Aug 5-10,	ELCA Churchwide Assembly, at the	For more information visit https://www.elca.org/churchwideas

2019	Wisconsin Center, Milwaukee, Wisc.	sembly
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