



The Weekly Epistle

The Nativity of John the Baptist
June 23, 2024

Take This Sheet Home With You!



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All Are Welcome! At St. Paul we welcome all to worship and share in God's love, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, age, economic status, background, life situation, or wherever you are in your faith journey.

All who Believe and are Baptized (from any church) are invited to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion here.

A Word from Pastor Tony

It's the holiday season...not the Nativity of Our Lord but a nativity worthy of celebration none-the-less. June 24 marks the annual celebration of the Nativity of John the Baptist. Born 6 months before his cousin, Jesus of Nazareth, the Baptist was instrumental in recognizing the coming of the Messiah after and even before his birth; while in utero, John leapt for joy at the sound of Aunt Mary's greeting to his mom, Elizabeth. Talk about starting to preach the Good News at a young age!

And that's what John continued to do. Even his baptisms and ministry of repentance were a way of introducing the coming of "one greater than I who comes after me." He was a person set apart and transformed into one concerned not with his own satisfaction and acclaim (as a human pointing inward), but rather with acclaiming God and the person of Jesus (as one sanctified pointing outward).

For those reasons John's birth, life, and death are a model for our own. While we often talk about Jesus as our perfect example, we cannot be God and we are not yet resurrected to glory. John, however, perhaps stands as our more realizable model for this life. John was great because he gave himself (and his greatness) over to the proclamation of God's work in the world. Jo, Jo, Jo!

*Merry Johnmas,
+Pastor Tony*

One who is more powerful than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to carry his sandals.
Matthew 3:11, NRSV



Our Hymns Today

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|--------------------|---|-------------------|
| ◆ Opening Hymn: | <i>On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry</i> | Green #36 |
| ◆ Psalm | 141 | Green, p.285 |
| ◆ Hymn of the Day: | <i>By All Your Saints in Warfare (w.1, 15, & 3 in that order)</i> | Green #178 |
| ◆ Communion Hymn: | <i>Comfort, Comfort Now My People</i> | Green #29 |
| ◆ Closing Hymn: | <i>Blessed Be the God of Israel</i> | Blue #725 |

The First Reading**Malachi 3:1-4**

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD, as in the days of old and as in former years. (NRSV)

The Second Reading**Acts 13:13-26**

Then Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. John, however, left them and returned to Jerusalem, but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent them a message, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, give it." So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak:

"You Israelites and others who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. For about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. After he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance for about four hundred fifty years. After that he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. When he had removed him, he made David their king. In his testimony about him he said, 'I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes.' Of this man's posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised; before his coming John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his work, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but one is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of the sandals on his feet.' My brothers, you descendants of Abraham's family, and others who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. (NRSV)

The Gospel**Luke 1:57-66**

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For indeed the hand of the Lord was with him. (NRSV)

SAVE THE DATE: VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2024!

Our annual vacation Bible school will be held Sunday July 21—Wednesday, July 24. Each day from 5:30pm—7:30pm.

Our theme will be “Holy Trinity!” Sign-up sheets for kids and volunteers are available in the narthex and online sign-ups are found on our website.

Communion Today

- ◆ **Communion today** is at the rail. Proceed down aisle filling in from outside toward center. Return to your pew down the side aisle on your side of the Church.
- ◆ **Grape juice & gluten free wafers are available**, just ask for them at the rail.

This Week's Schedule

Tuesday, June 25

Bible study 10:00 AM
Lounge

Wednesday, June 26

Cookout 6:00 PM
Front patio

Thursday, June 27

Prayerful Walkers 10:00 AM
Parking Lot

Friday, June 28

Piecemakers 10:00 AM
Fellowship Hall

Sunday, June 30

Adult Bible Study 9:00 AM
Lounge

Worship 10:00 AM
Nave

A Word on the Word

Old Testament prophecies point to the coming of John the Baptist and his mission to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. John's ministry of calling people to repentance and baptizing them in the Jordan River is viewed as fulfilling these ancient predictions, and help to affirm that Jesus is the awaited Messiah.

Perhaps the most famous of these is familiar to us from our season of Advent readings. From the prophet Isaiah, “A voice of one calling: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” (Isaiah 40:3, NIV) This is highlighted by all four Gospels and is in line with John’s life in the desert, eating his bugs and wild honey.

Our Old Testament reading from today, Malachi 3, is one of those passages as well. It is highlighted by Matthew, Mark, and Luke who cite this part of the Scripture. Malachi again comes up with the words of 4:5-6, “‘See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes...’” Matthew and Luke make mention of this.

John is Elijah come before, whether that is symbolic or something else is unclear but what we do find is that that practice of “looking for Elijah” was something of importance to 1st Century Jews awaiting the coming of the Messiah.



Officers Of The Congregation

President: Bill Graham
Vice President: Lillian Stevens
Treasurer: Joanne Seasholtz
Financial Secretary: Sue Cook

St. Paul Lutheran Church

Tamara Riegel, Administrator

Church Office Hours:

Monday-Thursday 9AM —Noon

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Serving Today:

Assisting Minister: **Sylvia McEwuen**

Lector: **Jennifer Reed**

Usher: **Bill Graham**

Counters: **Carol Henry & Lindsey Naumann**

Broadcaster: **Stephanie Setley**

Serving June 30th:

Assisting Minister: **Matt Sampson**

Lector: **Matt Sampson**

Usher: **Larry Springer**

Counters: **Kim Shockley & Mike Peters**

Broadcaster: **Carl Werntz**

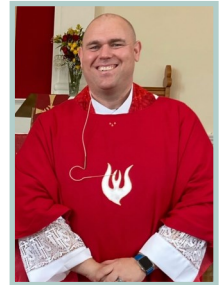
The Rev. Tony Setley, Pastor

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Online Offering

You can give a secure online offering with a debit/credit card or checking account. Scan or visit: stpaulmorgantown.org/giving

Thank you!

GIVE WHILE YOU SHOP

Kroger will make a donation to St. Paul every time you shop when you select St. Paul for Community Rewards on your Kroger account.

On the app, tap on the three parallel lines in the top right corner. Go to Rewards — Community Rewards, and choose St. Paul Lutheran, Morgantown. You can also sign up in your account at Kroger.com.



Wednesday, June 26

6 PM



All members and friends invited. Council will provide hot dogs, burgers, and drinks. Bring a side dish or dessert if you wish.

GOD'S HOUSE, OUR HANDS

Please consider signing-up for a temporary cleaning assignment here at church. Sheets are on the back table in the narthex.

