

## Bible Study Guide December 1, 2021

### First Reading: Malachi 3:1-4

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>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; <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

*God announces a covenant with Israel. A messenger like Malachi (his name means "my messenger") will prepare the way for the coming of the Lord by purifying and refining God's people, as silver and gold are refined. Of whom does Malachi speak? How will this messenger purify God's people? How is this message helpful to us?*

### Psalm: Luke 1:68-79

<sup>68</sup>Blessed are you, Lord, the God of Israel,  
you have come to your people and set them free.

<sup>69</sup>You have raised up for us a mighty Savior,  
born of the house of your servant David.

<sup>70</sup>Through your holy prophets, you promised of old to save us from our enemies,  
<sup>71</sup>from the hands of all who hate us,

<sup>72</sup>to show mercy to our forebears,  
and to remember your holy covenant.

<sup>73</sup>This was the oath you swore to our father Abraham:

<sup>74</sup>to set us free from the hands of our enemies,  
free to worship you without fear,  
<sup>75</sup>holy and righteous before you, all the days of our life.

<sup>76</sup>And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way,

<sup>77</sup>to give God's people knowledge of salvation  
by the forgiveness of their sins.

<sup>78</sup>In the tender compassion of our God  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

<sup>79</sup>to shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

*Zechariah sings this song of praise at the birth of his son, John. In it, he announces his son's future as the messenger who prepares the way for the Lord's*

*anointed. What comparisons can be made between the Roman occupation of the Israelites and our own time? How can we apply this song to our own lives?*

## **Second Reading: Philippians 1:3-11**

<sup>3</sup>I thank my God every time I remember you, <sup>4</sup>constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, <sup>5</sup>because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup>I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup>It is right for me to think this way about all of you because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup>For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup>And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight <sup>10</sup>to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, <sup>11</sup>having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

*The apostle Paul writes in this letter about his joy to be in partnership with the Christians of Philippi. Listen to how tender-hearted Paul is with his friends as he encourages them to grow in love and knowledge. How are we encouraging others to grow in their love and knowledge of God? Are there wrong ways to do this?*

## **Gospel: Luke 3:1-6**

<sup>1</sup>In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, <sup>2</sup>during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, <sup>4</sup>as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.

<sup>5</sup>Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;

<sup>6</sup>and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'

*John the Baptist is a herald of Jesus, whose way is prepared by "repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Repentance literally means "turning around", and it points to our turning back to the one who saves us. What could repentance mean in our context? Is it still important to repent when we know we are already forgiven? Why or why not?*