

Advent 3, 2009
Good Hope Lutheran Church
Luke 3: 18

Again from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 3—this is the last verse in today's lesson. It says, With many other exhortations, John the Baptist proclaimed Good News to the people.

Let us pray:

Blessed are you o Lord our God, maker of heaven and earth. In the beginning you created us and all living things, and in these last days you have saved us by the gift of your Son. We thank you for the Good News of Jesus your Son our Savior—as that news once filled the night sky over Bethlehem, so let it fill our lives today, and everyday, till the Kingdom comes at last. And it is in the name of that same Jesus Christ we pray, AMEN.

Back in Bible times. WAY back there, in Bible times, back before text messaging, back before twitter, back in the days before they even had cable TV for heaven's sake! Back in *those* days. If a Roman government official wanted to make a public announcement to all the people in a given area, what he would do, he would send out a messenger with some soldiers and a big ol' trumpet, and they would walk into the middle of a village. And the trumpet would blow, and the soldiers would sort of jab folks and let them know "Come on people, this means you, you better get out here and listen up, come on now!" And when the people were all there and quiet the government messenger would begin, "Euangellion everyone!" he would say. "Euangellion"—Good News, it literally means Good News, Gospel—"dear

citizens,” he would say, “I have euangellion for you, I have Good News!”

And the messenger would then go on to make whatever official announcement he was sent to make—Good News people, your taxes are only going up 50% this year! Or Good News people, we put down the latest rebellion so you are still firmly under Roman control! Yeah! Euangellion everyone, Good News!—and of course the question that nobody ever dared ask was, Umm, How is this News Good? How is this News Good and who’s it good for? Me?

The term euangellion—it’s written in your bulletin where you normally find the word sermon, just for your information—the term euangellion, good news, gospel, it was not made up by the people who wrote the Bible, ok? No, it was not *made up* by the Bible, it was *borrowed* by the Bible. The term was lifted from the official Roman government in an almost mocking sort of way—listen, said John the Baptist out by the Jordan River. Listen said Jesus Himself, when it came time for Him to begin His ministry. Listen, said guys like Matthew Mark Luke and John, years later when they wrote it all down for us, Listen! *We* have Good News! We have the *real* Good News, the real euangellion, and this news comes to you not from some scrawny earthly empire, but from God Himself! And this good news is not about taxes or politics or the passing affairs of an empire, it’s about forgiveness of sin, life

and salvation! And best of all, this Good News we announce is actually good *for you*—it's not just good for the guy sitting next to you, and it's not just good for some big shot somewhere—this is Good News for you, *your* family, your life, your forgiveness, *your* salvation. People, listen, said John the Baptist, among others. This is euangellion. It's Good News.

And that's why we are here again today, to hear the Good News, *real* Good News, from God, now what is this News, anyway? What is it I need to say and what is it you need to hear? Hopefully you kinda know the answer already—it's Jesus Christ crucified resurrected coming again. We proclaim, that in mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for you, and for His sake God forgives you all your sins. To you who believe in Jesus Christ, He gives the power to become the children of God, and bestows on you His Holy Spirit now, and opens to you the way of everlasting life. That's the message we proclaim—it may sound familiar—so let me spell it out a bit more.

First, and you see this in the Gospel lesson today, sin is serious. Ways of speaking, ways of acting, ways of responding to the people around you: You are in some bad habits, and some of those habits you've had since you were a kid; and let me tell you they haven't improved with age. The sins you commit really do hurt other people, and they diminish yourself—and they

offend God, your sin is serious. But God's forgiveness is real. Jesus died, for you. You don't have to go through life enslaved by bad habits, you don't have to go through life carrying a load of guilt and remorse. Give it all to Jesus, the Good News is, He'll take it.

Second, sin is real, and so is death. So is death, suffering, sadness, death, it's everywhere in this world and it really seems to be on a roll lately and when it hits us too? It hurts. Death is real, and it hurts, but death has been defeated—Jesus died, *and rose again*, remember. The Good News is, Jesus wins, and if you trust in Jesus then in the end we're going to win too. And we will, and in the meantime. While we deal with all the suffering and sadness this world has to dish out, it's also Good News to know that our God is not simply enshrined in heaven, sending us a sympathy card now and then. He is with us, to help us, today—Christ with us now, is Good News.

Finally, I think it's also Good News to know, that this message still needs messengers? God needs and wants to use you. Now we can't go out into the middle of our little village with a big trumpet and a pack of soldiers and make people listen, we can't do that. But we don't need to. God has given us the days and moments of a lifetime, and with those moments, God has given the chance each day to bear witness to Him, if you would be a messenger. If you would be a messenger, you'll find that the Good News speaks for itself.

Only believe and follow, this day forth and forevermore.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, AMEN.