

## **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

**December 12, 2021**

**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**A Fresh Start**

In Greece, a John the Baptist celebration is held every year, typically in June. A spectator once observed how thousands of pilgrims paraded down a trail to the floor of a great cavern, where mass baptisms were celebrated. One can imagine that the sense of anticipation among those who arrive at the festival for baptism is similar to what those who came to John in the wilderness experienced: expectation, hope, awe, maybe even fear. However, John made it clear that while he baptized them for repentance, the one who was coming would bring something totally different. Whereas John's baptism of water represented cleansing from their past, the baptism of Jesus is about a new future.

In the order for baptism in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, the baptized are washed with water paired with the promise of God's love. God's love is enduring and eternal. Sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the sign of the cross forever, the baptized are invited to remember this promise daily and the good news it brings: every day, we begin anew.

This good news means that we don't have to drag with us the burdens of yesterday. We don't have to live in a hamster wheel of guilt or despair that things will never change. Nor do we have to keep a list on a mental chalkboard of how many times we've messed up. Rather, having been baptized in Christ, we are set free to greet the new dawn with a sense of expectation and wonder, knowing that no matter what the day brings, we are made new, we are forgiven, and God is with us.

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