

**Lessons for The Second Sunday in Advent**

**December 9, 2018**

Psalm 66:1-12 ~ *Praise God for His awesome deeds, the fulfillment of our hopes.*

Malachi 3:1-7b ~ *God's messenger will prepare for the Lord's coming.*

Philippians 1:2-11 ~ *God is completing the good work of His righteousness in believers.*

Luke 3:1-14 (15-20) ~ *God sent John to prepare the way for Jesus' arrival.*

**GATHERING THE TEXTS:** Hope in the Face of Reality

Malachi brought the welcome message that God would come to His people, but he also warned them that their eyes would be opened to the reality of their sin! Because God does not change, His people must straighten up their lives! John's message in the wilderness was much the same: "let your lives show the hope you have placed in God by turning from your wicked ways!" St. Paul gave thanks for the fulfillment of this hope through the redeeming life of Jesus Christ, as God works in His people.

**PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE:** Lord God, we have placed our hopes in You to right the wrongs in our world, but we realize there is much wrong in our own lives, too. Prepare us for the day of Christ by filling us with Your love and righteousness. Amen.

**STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT:** We look in hope for Christ's return, but in our waiting, we often take advantage of those around us who are vulnerable. When we see Christ already among us in the weak and helpless, we will be quick to lift up their hopes by sharing coat and food.

**OFFERING PRAYER:** When empty hopes desert our hearts, and we have lost our way,  
Direct us, Lord, to place our trust in You, our coming King;  
And in these gifts we bring to You, and all we do and say,  
May hollow hearts be filled with hope and joyful songs to sing.

**CONVICTION AND COMFORT:** The "hopes and fears of all the years" are often co-mingled in our hearts because those things for which we hope will bring us up short against realities we'd rather not face. God's coming confronts us with the distance we have placed between ourselves and God! That distance is clearly seen in the waywardness of our lives. But in His grace, God overcomes that distance by uniting us to Himself through the righteousness that comes in Jesus Christ. Christ is our Hope; in Him our hearts are united in God's love.