

## Seedling Group Questions for the week of December 9 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent [C]

The sermon for December 9 can be found at [www.saidanotherway.org](http://www.saidanotherway.org)

### Questions for opening up

People are coming over to your house for dinner. What is your favorite part about getting ready? What is your least favorite?

Describe a time when you felt another person brought you a message from God.

### Read Malachi 3:1-4

Fuller's soap is a stringent alkaline substance used in antiquity to strip the lanolin off wool so that it could be lighter in color (and eventually receive dye). Refining fires melt away the dross of ore so that the pure precious metal can be drawn out. How is an encounter with God's Word like a refiner's fire or fuller's soap? What other types of experiences in people's lives act with "purifying-like properties" to bring about greater righteousness and faithfulness to God?

Malachi declares that Israel will be pleasing to the Lord "as in the days of old and as in former years." Is hearkening back to former time in your life (or in the world) an effective motivator for you to change? Why or why not?

What comes to mind (images, ideas, beliefs, etc.) when you think of the Lord's judgment? How is the cross of Jesus God's judgment on his people? In what ways is the cross of Jesus a form of purifying?

### Read Luke 3:1-6

Why does Luke list all the political and religious figures in verses 1-2?

Why do you think God chose someone like John to be Jesus' forerunner?

Where is the good news in this passage? Explain.

### Putting things together

Pastor Phillip says, "In fact, repentance is...like a change in perspective or a change of mind. It's about consciously being open to seeing things differently, to understanding things differently, which leads to responding to things differently. A part of repentance involves ceasing old ways, but it has more to do with turning around and embracing something new..." How does this fit in (or not) to the ways you've typically thought of repentance?

Why do the prophets consider acts of repentance (John's message) or purification (Malachi's) is essential to receiving God's promises? What might be the ramifications of refusing to repent?

Can you give an example of repentance in your faith journey?

### Making it personal

What kind of "landscaping work" (straightening, filling, grading) has God been doing in your life?

How often do you acknowledge to yourself or to others the ways God comes to you in the common, ordinary, "inappropriate" moments of your life?

### **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.

### **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.’ ”