

# Advent II - LOVE



Light the second Advent candle, the candle representing LOVE.

Read Matthew 3:1-6

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight.’”

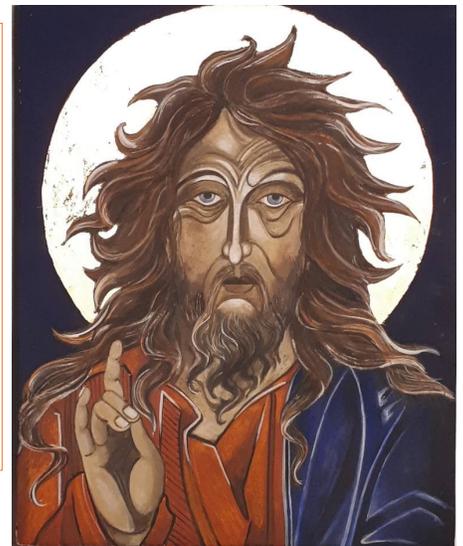
Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

## John the Baptist

John the Baptist is an important person in the season of Advent because he prepared the way for Jesus. He is also an interesting character. What does the text tell us about him?

Where did he live?  
What did he wear?  
What was he eating?  
What was he doing?

*Compare the images of John the Baptist on these pages. What do you notice about the artists' depiction of John? Which is your favorite? Why?*



John the Baptist by Lynda Miller Baker

## What did John Eat?

Because we are working on a pollinator garden and thinking a lot about insects and plants, I think it is interesting to take a closer look at the “locust” in this text. People have often assumed that John the Baptist was eating an



insect called a locust, which looks much like a grasshopper.



But, there is another possibility. There is a tree in the Middle East that the Bedouins (a nomadic Arab tribe that historically inhabited the desert) call a locust tree. It is also known as the Carob tree. These trees produce a long bean pod containing carob seeds. Carob tastes a lot like chocolate but is much healthier. While you cannot feed chocolate to dogs, carob is good for them. So, it is possible that John the Baptist was living in the wilderness eating honey and something like chocolate. Sounds a lot less miserable, doesn't it?!

As one of your activities this Advent, consider making carob dog treats. If you do not have a dog, share them with your neighbor's or friend's dog! They will love them! See the recipe on the last page.

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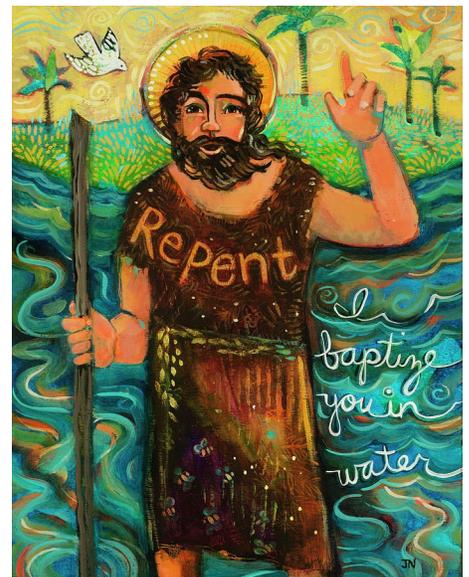
## Repent & Baptize

As you remember, John was in the wilderness baptizing and calling people to repent.

Definition: *to repent means to turn around or go the other way. It means to change your behavior by doing the opposite thing.*

So, if you are being mean to your sister, to repent means you are kind to your sister. If you stole an item, you would repent by returning the item and not stealing again. Can your family come up with some other examples of what it would mean to repent?

John wanted people to prepare for the coming of Jesus by behaving differently, by doing what was good and right, by being kind, and by living a faithful life.



St. John the Baptist Tapestry by Jen Norton

John also wanted to help them prepare by baptizing them. Were you baptized? If so, do you remember it? If not, ask your parents to tell you the story. Where were you baptized? Who baptized you? Who was with you? What does it mean to you and to your parents that you were baptized?

For Presbyterians, baptism is a sign of God's love. Many Presbyterians are baptized when they are babies. This reminds us that God claims us as God's child even before we can know God. Baptism is also a welcoming into the church community. The congregation promises to help teach you about Jesus and about God. They promise to love you too.

How has First Presbyterian, taught you about Jesus and God and showed you that they love you?



How has First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, sought to teach you about God and your faith? How have they shown you love and support?

John the Baptist invited people to prepare for the coming of Jesus who would show them what God was like. John was preparing the way, making space, and opening people up to something new.

John Baptizing Christ in the Jordan© David Zelenka

### Pollinator Garden Connection

You all spent several hours cutting back shrubs and pulling weeds from a space on the church property to prepare it for a pollinator garden. Preparing is an act of love. How?

Last week we reflected on hope. This week, we are considering about what it means to love.

We are in the middle of the holiday season in which we spend a lot of time getting ready and preparing.

In what ways did you all (or your mom and dad) prepare for Thanksgiving?

How will you prepare for Christmas?

How is preparing for these two holidays an act of love?

How is making room for something an act of love?

### Advent Week II Project

Think of a way your family can prepare for Christmas this year. It might be a tradition you want to continue or something new you want to try. Maybe you want to make a special family recipe and share it with others. Maybe you want to make a card for a grandparent or relatives you will not see this Christmas. Maybe you want to donate some items to those in need – food, clothing, toys, etc. Maybe you want to make the carob dog treats for a neighbor's dog. Maybe you want to thank someone at the church who has been special to you and supported you or helped teach you about your faith.

As a family, think of how you will show love to one another and to others? In doing this, we are making room for God in our hearts. When we love, we make more and more room for love. As I so often tell my daughter, love is not a limited thing. While she is much younger than you all, I think we all need reminded of this fact. I love her, our family and pets, my friends, and many others. I even have room for loving people I have not yet met. As I do so, love only grows. We never run out of love. This is because love is from God. It is the way God interacts with us. God loves us and, therefore, we have an endless supply of love to give. We even have enough love to give to the monarch butterfly and other amazing creatures who share this planet home with us! The more we love, the more we have to give, and the more we come to know the God that loves us.

If you are willing, share with Sally or Jim what your family decided to do to prepare for Christmas this year — how you decided to make your love grow.

## CAROB DOG BISCUITS

### INGREDIENTS

2 cups whole grain flour  
1/2 cup carob powder  
3/4 ripe banana (or omit the banana & use 2 eggs instead of one)  
1 egg  
3/4 cup canned pumpkin  
1/3 cup of natural peanut butter

### INSTRUCTIONS

Pre heat oven to 350 degrees.

Mix together egg, banana, pumpkin, and peanut butter in a separate bowl until combined. In a separate bowl, combine flour and carob powder. Mix dry ingredient in with wet ingredients until thoroughly combined. Mixture will be thick and dough like. Flour a counter surface and roll out dough. Use cookie cutters of your choice and place on cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake 25-30 minutes. Cool completely before serving.



#### Resources:

The Carob Tree: <https://canopy.org/blog/tree-spotlight-carob-tree/>

Carob Dog Biscuits: <https://theconsiderablecookie.com/carob-dog-treats/>