

Sermon Dec 6th
Advent 2
John the Baptist

“May the words from my lips and the meditations of our hearts always be pleasing to you O God.”

This second Sunday of Advent is all about John the Baptist and repentance.

The Gospel of Mark does not begin with the story of Jesus' birth. It begins with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness - prepare the way of the Lord - make the pathways straight!

Mark chooses to begin with a herald - with a warm up band if you will. Mark does this to draw the connection with his story of Good news - or Gospel as we name it to the ancient Israelites and the prophets of old. Mark sees in John the Baptist the one that Isaiah and Malachi spoke of. He makes the connection to Elijah. The description of John's clothes and diet would make this connection to Mark's audience. In the Gospel of Mark, John the Baptist is dressed several generations out of fashion! The connection to Elijah is necessary as people believed that Elijah would return before the Messiah arrived. For Mark it is important to show that Jesus is the culmination of Jewish tradition.

Our reading this morning is why we continue to read and study and proclaim the Old Testament. Without the Old Testament a great deal of the New Testament would make no sense.

As John is baptizing people in the Jordan, Mark is making the connection to the people of Israel entering the promised land via the Jordan. In the Gospel of Mark, John the Baptist does not threaten people. His role is to be a herald of Jesus. He is setting the stage - he is starting to tell of the Good News.

John the Baptist - the warm up band calls us to prepare for something important. John calls us to prepare for God. John was not some crazed man - he was like the prophets of the past. John was the mouthpiece of God.

So how do we prepare for God?

John the Baptist tells us that repentance is what is needed. John the strange man in a desert - calling people to repent and get washed up!

We are hungry for good news. And John brings it. John proclaims that something big is about to happen. But you need to be ready.

John was an enormously successful preacher. He had crowds following him, listening to him, wandering out into the

dessert to get a look at him and hear what he had to say. And they were baptized in droves.

And they repented.

So how do we prepare? How do we repent? Repentance means naming our fears, sins, prejudices, complicity and feelings of hopelessness.

This year has given us many things to repent of.

What are your fears?

What are your sins?

What are your prejudices?

What have you been complicit or complacent about?

Have you felt hopeless?

John's call for repentance echos through the centuries - screams at us from the text. And it's a call we need to hear. If we are to prepare properly for the coming of the Christ child we have some work to do.

It begins with each of us. Repent - make the pathways straight.

When we repent it means that we stop blaming others for the ills of our world. It means taking responsibility for our place in the world.

As we move through Advent we are waiting for Christ - waiting to be set free - waiting to be welcomed home. Waiting to be sent out into our community again.

So on this 2nd Sunday of Advent we heed the Baptist's call and we repent and we are reconciled and now we need to get to work.

And on this 2nd Sunday of Advent we give thanks for the ones who have come before. We give thanks for those who have prepared the way. We give thanks for those who are preparing the way and we give thanks for those who will come after us to continue the work of making the pathways straight.

We celebrate the heralds. Those that call us to tell the truth.
AMEN