

Scripture

Malachi 3: 1-4

Canticle 16 - The Song of Zechariah

Philippians 1:3-11

Luke 3: 1-6

Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord!

Outline:

Focus on John the Baptist - the one who came before Jesus, the baptizer

Family lineage

Parallels with Jesus - divine incarnation, prophetic witness

Meaning of forgiveness in Greek (look up)

Advent is the season to Let it Go - and Prepare the way of the Lord

Christ is coming - Christ is here and Christ will come again. The

Harvest of Righteousness will soon be here

Today's candle for the Second Sunday of Advent is HOPE.

What the world needs now is HOPE.

Today's Gospel lesson focuses on John the Baptist - the trailblazer who baptized Jesus with water while God watched from Heaven.

John the Baptist lived in the wilderness where he reportedly ate locusts and honey - yet his words and actions focus on the spiritual preparation all of us should be doing during Advent to welcome the birth of the Christ child.

I spoke last week about spiritual preparedness - a state of readiness informed by prayer and guided by the holy Spirit that requires us to examine our lives in Christ. Are we truly living in accordance with Christ's teachings? Can other people experience the light and love of Christ through us?

I imagine that all of us are busy this month preparing our homes and our shopping lists for the celebration of Christmas. Our busyness may mask feelings of loneliness - remembering loved ones we see no longer and lingering memories of Christmas pasts when our children were younger and life seemed simpler.

John practiced a baptism of REPENTANCE - encouraging all to cleanse their hearts and minds from sin and seek forgiveness through baptism.

To really understand the meaning of this Gospel passage - and John the Baptist's ministry, we need to unpack the original Greek word for Repentance. **Metanoia** Meta means "After" or "change". The word literally

means “change of mind”. Metanoia implies transformation into a

2

new mindset. Richard Trench defines Metanoia as “a mighty change of mind, heart and life that can only be brought about by the Spirit of God,”

Linguists over the years have diluted the meaning of this profound word to mean REPENTANCE - which is the word used in the Gospel passage.

What John the Baptist was doing as he baptized with water, was preparing people for the ministry, life and death of Jesus - the Messiah. Before accepting his call to be baptized, people had to humble themselves before God and submit to God’s word and accept Jesus as the Messiah, sent by God to forgive them of their sins.

John the Baptist was a holy trailblazer - clearing a path for Jesus. In this passage, we see his life as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 40: 3-5

“A voice cries out “in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord;
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low;

The uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken”

By using this text from Isaiah, the author of the Gospel of Luke skillfully integrates the words said to the Israelites who were exiled in Babylon. By incorporating this text into the Gospel of Luke, the author

3

recalls the Messianic hopes of the Israelites so that John's hearers would understand the importance of his prophesy. By accepting John's message of repentance (or Metanoia), and humbling themselves before God, his baptized people were prepared to greet the Messiah.

The birth of John the Baptist to Elizabeth and Zechariah was divinely inspired. Both were in their 90s and beyond child bearing age. Yet, God has another plan. Their lifelong faith in God prepared them to accept the challenge of raising a young boy while in their senior years. Little is known about John's childhood. Once he was old enough to receive the word of the Lord, he became an itinerant preacher who went through the hills of northern Israel near the River Jordan calling people to come forward and be baptized with REPENTANCE. John's baptismal approach resembled Metanoia - the people he baptized were transformed by the Holy Spirit once they sought forgiveness for their sins.

Luke's parlance - the crooked will be made straight and all shall see God's salvation. That is quite the promise - and one we draw closer to as we prepare our hearts, minds and souls to welcome Christ on Christmas - and everyday of our lives.

May it be so.

AMEN.

Gospel of Luke Study Notes rst 7 chapters

