

Readings Advent 2

Malachi 3:1-4

Philippians 1:3-11

Luke 3:1-6

Preparing the Advent Way

A Hasidic story tells of a rabbi's son who used to wander in the woods. The rabbi asked his son, "I wonder why each day you walk in the woods?" The boy replied, "I go there to find God." "That's very good, son. But, don't you know that God is the same everywhere?" "Yes," the boy answered, "but I'm not."

One of the most common questions asked in this season is what are we waiting for? We say we are waiting for the arrival of God but Is God not already with us? And of course the answer is yes. But isn't it also true that we often need reminders in life to help us recognize that which we already have. Advent is one of those reminder times. It's a time when we are given the opportunity to become more alert to God with us and the places where God's light may need to be shone just a little brighter.

Today's scriptures invite us to 'prepare the way' for God's coming. To recognize where the pot holes of life have flattened our tires and where we have followed the wrong directions and need to find our way back home.

Baruch holds up a new life and direction for a grieving Jerusalem. The people of Israel are told the scattering, destruction has been repaired and they are welcomed home.

Dianne Bergant says "Luke alludes to a passage from Isaiah depicting a similar scene. In the original setting, the exiled people were told that God would lead them home, much as God led their ancestors through the wilderness to the promised land. They were assured that all obstacles would be removed so this could be accomplished. Luke connects John, who lived in the wilderness of Judea, with that voice "crying out in the desert." By implication, if John is the voice, then Jesus is the one leading the people back home.

These readings do not focus on Jesus' coming to us, but his coming with us. He leads us to salvation. Because there are obstacles in our path, road construction is necessary. This is not the kind of road repair that we can avoid by taking another route. We will have to move carefully through reconstruction of the road as we travel over it."¹

¹ Bergant, Dianne. Second Sunday of Advent (C) Dec. 7 2003 "Prepare the way of the Lord"

Preparing the way calls us to repentance. It calls us to look at the signs and events in our lives that are telling us to turn back, discover a new way, a more life-giving way. This Advent way is the time to make things right that the glory of God might shine brightly.

It is the time to ask where are the places where I am not allowing the presence of God to be fully alive in myself and others? We might need to ask ourselves where am I holding on to things I need to let go of? Where do I need to forgive, or be more honest? Where am I placing my power over others in a way that is hurtful? Where is it that I am not living the kingdom way? What obstacles are in the way of the path to fullness of life?

As Bergant says “The image of Jerusalem held out to the people of Israel encouraged them as they journeyed back home. The city they loved so dearly was clothed in the “splendor of glory from God...wrapped in the cloak of justice.” The image held out to us is no less resplendent. It is the new Jerusalem, the new city of peace and justice, the reign of God on earth.

The journey toward that city may be tedious, and the obstacles we encounter on the way may seem overwhelming, but God leads us just as God led the Israelites. Our faith assures us of this, and we have Paul to spur us on: “I am confident...that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it.”

We may be puzzled by Advent readings that say nothing about Jesus’ birth. But what we are anticipating is the advent of our salvation. Its ultimate manifestation entered our world with Jesus’ birth; it takes root in our lives as we respond to God’s grace; and it will be brought to completion when Christ comes in glory. We are on the way. That is why we need a stretch of good road.”²

² Bergant