

**Bethel Anglican Church**

**St. John's Street on the Point**

**St. John's, Antigua**

**The Second Sunday of Advent: (C)**

**December 5, 2021**

**A Sermon by the Rev. Joe Parrish**

**“Are we getting ready?”**

**DRAFT**

**The Holy Gospel according to**

**Luke 3:1-6**

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, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 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. 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; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

Make us ready, Lord, for what is coming.

Amen.

John the Baptist was not one of those whom one would think the “word of God” would ever come to. He was a hermit-sort, with a somewhat well-known Jewish priest father who served occasionally at the great Jerusalem Temple. John was perhaps a typical PK, a “preacher’s kid”. He had become rather anti-social, living out in the desert, and roughing it-- what once would have been termed, “hippie like”, or one of the “beat generation”. And then suddenly he began this intense interaction with people from “civilization”, calling them to

repentance for their sins, giving practical advice to soldiers and others on how to behave ethically, and castigating those temple authorities from Jerusalem that had sought him out for his “baptism of repentance” without really being ready to repent.

John the Baptizer was characterized as being the striking voice in the wilderness prophesied by the prophet Isaiah in about the fourth century BC. The Lord God was on his way down to earth, and God’s way was to be made straight and smooth. John’s declaration was ominous and fetched people from far and wide to come to his little dirt pulpits all around and beside the Jordan River. The chord John struck in people

perhaps for the first time in their lives made them aware of the demands of their holy God.

Christmas is in the vogue in Japan although Christians are a vast minority there, only two or three percent at most. One Japanese Christmas shopper was asked if she knew the meaning of Christmas. Laughing, she responded, “I don’t know. Is that the day that Jesus died?” Maybe she got it more correct than we would like to think. The hustle and bustle of Christmas shoppers is far removed from the sacredness of the holiday.

Advent is still a time of repentance as it has been for the past many centuries. We are called to begin this new church year with a sense of the profound responsibility we must come close to God in thought, word, and deed. We need to become more sensitive to the needs of others while examining our own inner lives for symptoms of dis-ease. Maybe we can call forth a defense of “the devil made me do it” if we suddenly come face to face with our God. But will that be enough? Just recognizing evil is not enough. Avoiding evil like the plague is the only solution. There is nothing that qualifies as a “little” sin. We need to recognize that we have all gone astray, and we need to turn our

lives around and walk again with our Lord and Savior Jesus. He is waiting, but not for long. He has delayed, but perhaps today or tomorrow, or very, very soon, our lives will be cut short and we will face the judgment seat of God.

What will be our defense?

Indeed, by grace are we saved, not by works. But do our works of righteousness show evidence of our sincere repentance? How have we treated the down and out? What homeless persons have we helped? What hungry persons have we fed? What lonely persons have we befriended? And to whom have we witnessed to our faith recently?

John the Baptist seemed to call even us to a life lived closer to our God and Savior Jesus Christ, we who hear his words twenty centuries later. John's call of clearing our consciences, of living justly, and of respecting and knowing the Word of God seem just as real today as it did two millennia ago. We too need to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. It may be the disaster today or tomorrow, it may be the frailty of life we all face, but we each need to take this brief time of Advent to think again on how we can be faithful occupants of the kingdom of God.

Alpha, delta, and omicron, all those variants and more, all are signals to us of how tenuous life is, and how unpredictable is the future. All we can take care of is the present. The past is in God's hands. The future will be in God's hands. But the present is what we have control of. How will we invest it--for good or for evil? The tempter will always be trying to influence us to forget God, to ignore God, to escape from God. But we know in our heart of hearts that avoiding God can never be the option. God is as close to us as our breath. God sees us more clearly than any surveillance camera. But our God also has provided us all a "way out". God

has sent us his Son to believe in, to protect us, and now to intercede for us. Jesus Christ sits at God's right hand. But he will leave there again and come to us in power and glory to judge the living and the dead. We need to be ready. We need to prepare the way of the Lord.

Amen.

Description: Advent is a time for review, reflection, revision, and re-visioning. What will we change for the better? What will we leave behind that was unproductive? How do we make our way to the Lord and for the Lord straighter?

Tags: John, Baptist, baptizer, Advent,  
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