

December 6, 2020
Second Sunday in Advent

“Are You Ready?”
Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake

Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 40:1-4, 8

*Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her
that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.*

A voice cries out:

*“In the wilderness prepare 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 people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.*

Mark 1:1-8

*The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’ ”*

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

SERMON: “Are You Ready?” Reflections on Peace

Here we are in advent. A time of waiting... like we didn't already have plenty to be waiting for. A vaccine for one, an end to the isolation, waiting for things to return to normal, waiting for the time we can hug our friends and see smiles. We are already very much in a state of waiting and have been, going on 9 months.

So, how are we to find peace... in this waiting time of ours?

I think it depends on what aspect of peace we are looking to achieve? There's peace and quiet, at home, no drama, no distractions or stress. That's nice, but having peaceful surroundings doesn't mean that your heart, your mind or spirit are peaceful, right?

Matter of fact, some of the times I am the least peaceful is when all is quiet, when there is calm around me and I have time to think, or overthink, or worry.

And how are we to find peace when we look around the world and see such an absence of it in the world? I think we have to break down the different kinds of peace a little. There is the peace that can only come through Justice, when wrongs are made right on a global and national scale.

When all the nations create systems of government that treat everyone equally and fairly. When there is economic, environmental, and ethical justice, then there can be peace on earth, goodwill toward all.

But there is so much necessary and hard work, so much evolving to do before this kind of peace can be achieved. Now this is important work of course to our God, but there is another kind of peace that actually can give us the strength we need as individuals and as a small community of believers to stay in that fight for God's Peace on Earth.

This kind is the “peace that passeth all understanding that Paul spoke of” It is a deep and abiding peace in our spirits that we can have whether we are alone in our home for the 9th month, or out in the world fighting for a good cause. A peace that we can find even when we are low and heartbroken and also in the midst of any raging storm.

This is a peace that is ours that only comes from God and it only comes from letting go and letting God lay claim to our heart, to our life. It comes when you surrender yourself as Jesus did, and let God have your life.

It comes when you know that you are not alone on this journey, ever, that you are God's and God's love is unflinching and unfailing. No matter what.

When you accept this you will feel in the landscape of your soul “Every valley lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed through each and every one of us, as it is for so many of you already.

John the Baptist believed in the future but in the meantime helped people in the moment. By teaching them the simple act of confession and baptism he prepared the way for Jesus.

It wasn't the ritual acts themselves, it was that in confessing our shortcomings we give God the chance to tell us that we are acceptable just the way we are. That no matter what we have done we are still worthy of love.

Each day we can emotionally rebaptize ourselves by telling God what is going on with us. Saying out loud to God and others “I am lonely, I am sad, I am angry, I am hurting, I am jealous and letting that peace wash over us like the waters of the river Jordan.

When we say things out loud they simply lose their power over us. We invite God to partner with us in becoming our best selves.

John prepared the way for Jesus by getting people to start making that inward turn, to ask themselves what have I done in the past that I need to simply wash away. What does God want from me today?

Our understanding of sin in my opinion has been drastically twisted by so many different things, our overemphasis on sex, our underemphasis on how soul destroying greed can be. Our comfort with worshipping things other than God and so on. But sin simply means “to miss the mark,” to aim for something and to miss.

The peace of God, that solid foundation that you are God's, that peace lets you miss that mark and then try again, and again, and again, knowing even when you fail-- you are still loved. Let that love in, own it, it is yours, you are enough, always have been and always will be, nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Let that take hold of you and you will understand the peace that passeth all understanding that comes from knowing God through Jesus Christ. AMEN

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PEACE?

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-- REV. SUSAN DRAKE

