

Jesus is Coming – Get Ready – Give Thanks

Luke 3:1–6

It may seem unusual to read about John the Baptist as we get ready to celebrate Christmas, but this is a get-ready-for-the-baby-Jesus text.

Preparation is important. If we aren't prepared, we miss something. Advent is a reminder to us to prepare, to clear the path for Christ to be welcomed into our world.

How might preparing for Christmas be connected to how the Spirit is preparing you to renew your understanding of Christ's light in your life? This text asks us to think about how we get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus. How can our getting ready change us? Are we filled with gratitude for the gift of the Christ child full of grace, love, hope, and peace?

The scripture starts with a list of rulers and power brokers both political and religious. This list is in contrast to the ruler, the king, the messiah who is coming and will be born in the humble setting of a stable.

Throughout the Bible, we read these introductions where there is a chronology of sorts. Many times, we skip over them because they seem irrelevant or we don't even know how to pronounce the names. The thing is, these introductions are actually helping us understand the context of who was in leadership, which also gives us some insight into what was going on at the exact time and the issues that the people of this time were facing. After this introduction, there is recognition that while they were living under the leadership of the people listed, John was traveling through this same land and people were being transformed by their relationship to Christ and their understanding of God's grace for them.

Think about your context. What leaders – political, religious, or otherwise – have you been shaped by? How has living and learning in this time with these particular leaders influenced you? How have you been transformed by Christ's love and God's grace in the midst of it all?

Then we read "The Word of God came to John, son of Zechariah, in the wilderness." In a tiny, faithful family, on the edge of the empire, in the wilderness, there is nothing less than the Word of God, the breath of life, presence of the Creator. I suspect Luke wants us to know that God's power is stirring. It is just over our shoulder, pressing us forward into a new future. The powers of darkness, evil, injustice, disease, and death cannot keep the light of God from shining on our path.

John receives the word of the Lord in the wilderness. The desert is a place of scarcity, little shelter, and deep threat that has the power to change and enlighten people. Perhaps that is why the word of the Lord came to John the Baptist there, in the desert—a place where he could be changed, a place where others could be changed. That is why we observe the season of Advent to enter into the wilderness for a while, a place where we, too, can be changed.

Then quoting Isaiah, John says "Prepare the way of the Lord." Preparation is what we are to be about during Advent. We think preparing means decorating and buying presents and baking Christmas cookies—and this is part of the joy of the season. We have parties and sing carols and all of this is good. In the midst of all this celebration, Luke says listen to a prophet.

It is two weeks before Christmas. I know there is so much that stands between this day and that night. There will be shopping and decorating, stress and family, wrapping and baking, joy and sadness. There will even be shorter days with more darkness than today. In the midst of all this, remember that Jesus is coming. Get ready and give thanks because nothing can stop this birth. The child is coming, and we need to prepare because "all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

What does this amazing moment mean to you? What does this event mean for the world?

Think about it – Pray about it – Live it

Bob