

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Second Sunday of Advent – December 5, 2021

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness...” (Luke 3:4)

The wilderness is an appropriate metaphor for the condition in which we find ourselves in. It’s like wandering around, lost, completely alone, in a wasteland that is barren, cruel, and unforgiving. And then suddenly we hear John’s voice intruding into our wilderness and we are comforted, we are named, and we receive freedom and a new identity and we are prepared for the coming (advent) of God.

The wilderness is not a place for the faint of heart, sissies, or wimps. It’s a place where you have lost your way and can’t find your way home. There is no roadmap or GPS. The wilderness is not a geographical location like the Sahara Desert. It’s a terrifying place where wild, hungry beasts prowl around hunting while others lie in wait ready to spring their trap. There are no clear pathways, only chaos, temptation, and so much confusion your head spins.

And then we hear John’s words that free us because it proclaims a way out of the wilderness. In a place where only the howling of wild beasts are heard, there is a voice announcing, “Prepare the way of the Lord.” Because we can’t find our way out to him, he finds his way in to us. The Lord comes to us.

Such words, spoken to us by a crazy guy like John is a sermon that creates a new reality for us and then leads us out of our present situation. Perhaps we have lived in this wilderness so long it has become “normal.” You can imagine no other way of life. You have lived here so long you feel powerless because there seems to be no alternative, no clear path, or no way out. You sense, you think, you feel, like God has forgotten you. And now, you hear the announcement of a new reality that frees you, that loosens the chains and frees you from the wilderness.

Prepare the way of the Lord. We have heard the words so often from Handel’s Messiah that we miss the way it creates a new reality for us. God bulldozes a way through the valleys and mountains to get to us because we couldn’t get to him. This God comes for you because he loves you. We are all called to remind each other that God is at work in and through our lives for the sake of the world God loves so much. Amen.

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