

## **John's Cry to Repent Second Week of Advent**

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**December 6, 2015**

### **Luke 3:1-6**

This is the second week in Advent, I can't believe it is only 2 ½ weeks until Christmas and I'm sure all of you are starting to think about all the preparations and shopping that is in the near future, it never seems that we are ever ready in time but here comes John the Baptist to straighten us out.

We are all familiar with John, even though he lived over 2000 years ago, we know his story and we have heard it many times before. He wears camel's hair, eats locust and honey and lives in the desert. This strange man who is out in the desert calling everyone to repent and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah.

Peggy talked to us last Sunday during her Godly Play presentation about the prophets of the Old Testament prophesying about the coming of Christ and here is John the Baptist this week implementing what Isaiah talked about. John is the voice of Advent, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, the strange man that everyone is looking at like he may be crazy.

But we could also be called strange maybe even a little crazy, in the next few weeks we will wear ourselves out getting prepared, shopping, baking, cooking, wrapping gifts for Christmas, but will we even stop once to prepare a way for the Lords coming in our hearts and lives?

John repeats what Isaiah, the prophet, spoke in the Old Testament, "We are to prepare the way of the Lord and make His paths straight."

Let's look at John as an example, he didn't build a highway in the wilderness for Christ but prepared the hearts of the people who heard him, they repented and John baptized them in the river, right where they were gathered, they repented right where they stood on the banks of the Jordon.

Repent, what does the word repent mean? Quite simply it means to "turn around" to change direction, to face a new way, and to begin to walk on that way, leaving the old way behind.<sup>1</sup>

John pointed out that we are to repent and then prepare the way of the Lord, and that way is not a simply path in the desert, but rather it is a path in our hearts, a direction and a step that we must take, if we are to be ready for Christ's coming.

We are to examine our souls and prepare for the coming of Christ into our lives. We even sing that line in the Christmas hymn, "Joy to the World." In the song we sing "Let every heart prepare him room."

I know it has been awhile for most of us to make preparations for a brand new baby in our lives. But think back to that time when we knew there was a baby coming, sure we were busy getting everything ready, but we had our hearts open and we were falling in love with someone we didn't even know yet.

That's what we need to do now, there is a brand new baby boy coming to us in 2 ½ weeks and we need to be ready, we need to open our hearts up to receive Christ in and let His love just overflow in our hearts. We need to prepare.

Prepare is the great theme of Advent, as it is the essence of nearly everyone's preoccupation at this time. Everyone is preparing for Christmas: everyone is getting the cards ready, buying the presents, making sure that the refrigerator is full. "Preparation" is something we all understand.<sup>2</sup>

But the Advent preparation we are given in this reading is in terms of a path, to make the Lord's paths straight. If we make His paths straight His eyes will not be fixed on the ground but directly on us as He comes to meet us.

In other words, the way of the Lord to come into our lives should be on a path that is clear and not cluttered, He shouldn't have to fight to get entrance into our lives. I reflect on this in my life and two things come to mind: First I notice I have too much clutter that gathers on the roadway of my life during the season of Advent, to say nothing of the clutter of ordinary days. I confess that during this season I am easily distracted from the call of John the Baptist to "Prepare the way of the Lord." It is as though the world calls me to prepare for everything but the Lord.

Second in making a straight path for the Lord to enter my life instead of having an uphill battle with Him speaks to me about priorities. I find I need to question myself; it might be a little upsetting, but necessary. If I write down a list of what I think are real priorities on my calendar for the next few weeks would it become painfully clear that I need to rearrange them, I think so.

John tells us the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth, he is saying that we need to turn away from everything that clutters the paths of our lives and to look at the real priorities for our relationship with the Lord during this season to make the path smooth for Christ to enter in, we need to make our heart smooth and free of clutter for the precious brand new baby boy that is coming into our lives. We need to repent and we will see the Salvation of God.

To repent is to recognize that the old ways in which we have traveled lead us nowhere, and then to turn around, and to ask for God's forgiveness and help, and to start walking in the way that leads us to the light that is coming into the world.<sup>1</sup>

The repentance that most of us need, the turning around that most of us require, is not a hard thing, although it may seem that way now, but it is a change of attitude toward life, and toward the things we think important. Repentance is doing things in a new way, a way that gives life both to us and to others, a way that allows the Lord to enter more deeply into our hearts.

I put together a list of some ways we might look at preparing our lives and others as we take time to turn around and repent during this Advent as we prepare the way of the Lord's coming.

Let go of some activity so that will give you more time for your family, your church home, and your friends.

Meditate each day on God's generosity and His call to live by His love

Say yes to sharing Christmas stories and singing the songs of the season with the children in your lives.

Invite a stranger to dinner, or someone you know is lonely

As hard as it sounds we can try to do less and relax a little more.

Speak a word of encouragement and support to a fellow worker, a neighbor, a stranger whose actions touched your life.

Read the scriptures and pray for your church and the world.

This is the season of good news, the season of preparing ourselves for the coming of the Lord, the season of celebration, of rejoicing, of praising God for what He has done, and what He is doing, and what He has yet to do.

When others look at us this Advent season will they be able to say "Yes, something special is happening, something good is going on at St Aidan's"

So let us be a living example this Advent as we prepare the way for the Lord's coming.

Amen

1. Rev. Richard J. Fairchild 1996-2005 [://www.spirit-net.ca/sermons/b-ad02se.php](http://www.spirit-net.ca/sermons/b-ad02se.php)
2. Rev. Richard J. Fairchild 2002-2005 <http://www.rockies-net/~spirit/sermons/b-ad02sn.php>