

## **A Call to Prepare Second Week of Advent**

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It is so good to be back, I want to thank everyone for their prayers and support. I was told by my surgeon that my voice might not be the same after my surgery but thank God it has come back. This is the first time I will be preaching in at least two months and I know that God has a sense of humor since instead of preaching quietly and not straining my voice He has me proclaiming the call to prepare for the coming of the Lord and John the Baptist is crying loudly in the wilderness.

Can you believe it is already 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, there is always the last minute rush on Christmas Eve.

In today's reading John the Baptist is the voice of Advent, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, the voice of the Good News of Christ.

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. We think he's a little strange this man who is out calling everyone to repent, be baptized and be prepared because the kingdom of heaven has come near.

But at this time of the year most everyone looks a little strange. Everyone in the next few weeks will wear themselves out getting prepared, shopping, baking, cooking, wrapping gifts for Christmas, but when do we stop, do we even think about what this time of the year is really about? Do we take the time to be quiet, to sit down, to slow our breathing and let everything go and prepare a way for the Lords coming into our hearts and lives?

Our Gospel reading from Mark repeats what Isaiah, the prophet, spoke in the Old Testament, "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 Jordan.

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 highway in the desert, but rather it is a highway 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.”

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 for us to prepare we must recognize that the old ways in which we have traveled lead us nowhere, we need to turn around, to ask for God’s forgiveness and help, and 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 to prepare our lives and others around us 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.

And take time to read the scriptures, pray for your church and especially for the world.

This can just be the start of making our paths straight, to get rid of some of the clutter in our lives so we can help others, reach out, especially in Advent and we 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 walks to meet us.

Yes He is coming to meet us, Christ is coming, He is coming to this world, a world full of pain, suffering, and death, we hear about it every day on TV, in the last few weeks we have seen the terrible fighting over recent court cases that have turned good people against each other. We even see it when our own streets are on the news, and then we see the homeless on the corners, the Seton house children who are left behind when adults become too selfish, the poverty that can be found around us and then the intolerance for it and how it hardens people.

But yet Christ, right in the middle of all of our mess is coming, He isn't waiting for us to get it right, He's coming, and He's coming soon just as John the Baptist tells us, John says we are not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals and yet He's coming.

I would like to read a poem by Madeline L'Engle, an author, actress, and Episcopalian.

### **First Coming**

He did not wait till the world was ready,  
till men and nations were at peace.  
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,  
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.  
He came when the need was deep and great.  
He dined with sinners in all their grime,  
turned water into wine.

He did not wait till hearts were pure.  
In joy he came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.  
To a world like ours, of anguished shame  
he came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,  
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.  
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh  
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane  
to raise our songs with joyful voice,  
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,  
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

## Amen

1. Rev. Richard J. Fairchild 1996-2005 <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>
3. <https://carolinemccain.wordpress.com/2011/12/04/first-coming-by-madeleine-lengle/>