



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Father Chris Comerford
December 9, 2018 Second Sunday of Advent

Reading I Baruch 5:1-9

Psalm 126:1-6

Reading II Philippians 1:4-11

Gospel Luke 3:1-6

Homily

If I ask all of you if you are ready for Christmas, I can guess what the answer is. Things go very quickly during this Advent Season. We now have two candles lit already. We know all the things that we need to do: buying presents, wrapping presents, cooking, baking, all of these things and it is hard to get all these things prepared. It kind of overwhelms us. What we hear in our readings today, it is not about that kind of preparation—the earthly preparation for our earthly celebrations. But it goes much deeper. Clearly God is calling us to prepare the way that is a little different.

In the readings today we hear from the prophet Baruch, one of your favorites, right, Baruch. We don't hear much from him. He was a scribe of the prophet Jeremiah and he helped write the prophesies of Jeremiah. But Baruch wrote this one book telling how God had spoken to him, it is almost like an addendum to the prophet Jeremiah. But in it we see that God is calling for people to come back together, and that's important.

The people of Israel had scattered through being conquered twice. The first one the ten tribes were conquered in 722 BC, and the second group, the southern group, were scattered in 582 BC. Now some of the tribes had come back from the Babylonian exile, most of them. But the other ten were kind of lost among all the peoples. Baruch is saying he is going to bring all his people back together. That is good news. We know it is still a ways to come but it is getting closer when we hear the Gospel.

Luke starts us with this litany of political leaders of the time: Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilot, Herod, Phillip, Lysanias, Annas, Calaphas, all these names and they do not mean much to us. But they did mean something to the people of that time. And clearly Luke is showing us that this was an historical event. It is put in context of when all of these people were ruling and he wanted us to know who that was. It would be like someone saying: "In the time of Donald Trump as president, Bruce Rouner as governor, and Thomas Paprocki is Bishop, and Francis is pope. It sets up that time. It makes things clear. And in that, who is going to come: John the Baptist. John gets this word from God in the desert and he goes through the whole region of the Jordon River preaching baptism and forgiveness of sins.

That is important. John is coming to bring about this restoration of the peoples, a new

exodus. The Jordan River is a place where the people can come, and cross the Jordan into the Promised Land. John is ushering this new time. And John himself would be the one to fulfill the words of the prophet Isaiah that we hear so much during this Advent season. “A voice of one crying out in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths; Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth.”

And that was important. Now we live in pretty flat land around here. We have a few hills across the river, but not much. After that it levels out. So this idea of all these winding roads and hills and valleys doesn't mean as much to us. But it does to people who live in mountainous regions as it is in Israel and we see how this can make a difference. We traveled along roads in Ireland and went through the mountains that were not very big or huge ranges, but there were still things that affected us. We were on a big bus and if you are going through winding roads on a bus it is always a little harrowing. You hope a car, or another bus, is not coming in the other direction. You are up and down and winding all around on these roads. Nothing is straight.

And that is the image that we have, and God is going to straighten this all out for us. The Messiah is going to change this. We are going to be brought to an easier travel to be together with God. This is good news that we need to hear. How do we get there? Clearly this preparation for us is not for a physical journey, but it is about preparing our hearts to receive Jesus, to be close to Him. It is hard sometimes to be like this: up and down and winding and not always living the way we should. We need to take that time to make it ready for the Lord.

So I hope that so far you have had a decent start for Advent. We still have time to be drawn into Advent. We are about half way through the Season. But it is good to reflect: what can we do to make that path wide in our lives? Are we taking the time to slow down and listen to the voice of the Lord, and to listen to John the Baptist and know that we need to change and repent. We can open our hearts to the wonderful promises we have from our Lord.

It is kind of interesting, all those figures Luke mentions. They were scallywags, some of the worst of the worst. And it was in the context of that when the world looked really bad that the best message comes—in John, in Jesus. That should give us hope, even as bad as it looked even with the rulers we have in our time, the voice of God speaks to us. We are not alone. He is calling us to be drawn back into His love. Let's open our hearts to prepare the way of the Lord. Let's seek to make straight paths and that we will receive our Lord with joy.

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