

The Second Sunday of Advent, Cycle C

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December 6, 2009

In the long history of God's revelation to man He has called prophets to speak His words to His beloved people. There are the great prophets that everyone can recall: Elijah and Elisha, Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel and Ezekiel. There are the lesser known prophets that some are unsure of, Baruch, Obadiah, Amos, Joel, Micah and Zechariah. Each and every one of them was called by God to remind the people, His people, of His great love for them. They were called to reveal God's plan. They were called to instruct, to reprimand, to correct. They were called to restore hope, to lift spirits, and to remind everyone that God is in control.

They came in moments of distress and dismay. They came in moments of exile and pain. They came in moments of despair and despondency. They spoke of a glorious future when mourning and misery would be cast aside, when the tears of men and women would be wiped away by

the hand of God. They spoke of supernatural events that would reveal God's glory to the nations. They spoke of God gathering all His children home again. They spoke of a time when God would stand before them not as a column of fire or cloud but in all of His resplendent glory. Not leading them away from their conquerors but leading them forward into broad sunlit uplands. They spoke in prose so that the most despairing could be lifted back to a place of hope. And when they spoke these words they were speaking for God.

The most important prophecies were the ones about Him coming, His coming to live amongst the people He so dearly loved. Ultimately the exile that the prophets were speaking of was not an earthly exile from the Promised Land only. They were not speaking of Egypt, Babylon, Rome or the Diaspora. They were speaking of the long exile of man from God beginning from the time of Adam. Not an exile from a place or culture or community but an exile from intimate communion with God. Not since our first parents, Adam and Eve, had walked with God

in the garden had we truly had an intimate relationship with God how He intended it.

Man had made many decisions and by and large they were poor decisions. He followed paths he shouldn't have followed. He worshiped other gods and material possessions. He partook in behaviors harmful to him and to others. The gulf created by Adam's fall was only widened by the subsequent actions of Adam's descendants, their sins and their selfishness. This was the state all men and women found themselves in a place of perpetual exile from God. Their only reason for going on, their only reason for hope was that they believed in the prophecies because the prophets who spoke them were men they could genuinely trust.

Then the greatest of all the prophets came. His message was not of a far distant future, but had immediate bearing upon their lives. He relied upon the prophet Isaiah and those words spoken so long ago were about to be fulfilled. This great prophet was John the Baptist.

And at the Baptist's cry everything changed because he was preparing the way for the Lord. His message was clear that all of the prophecies of old were about to be fulfilled. Therefore he called upon all the people to prepare themselves to encounter the living God in a new and intimate way. He called upon men and women to repent of their sins; to repent so that when they encountered the Lord they would be ready to follow him wherever he led.

We know without a doubt that all of the prophecies were fulfilled. Our Blessed Lord came in the flesh as a human being like us in all things but sin. He walked amongst the people. He knew hunger and thirst. He knew sorrow and joy. He suffered as we suffer and he knew the same consolation that we know. He experienced our lives in a unique way and when He was called upon to sacrifice himself for our sakes He did it willingly. He willingly suffered the humiliation of condemnation by his own people. He willingly endured torture at the hands of the Roman conquerors. He willingly bore the heavy wood of the cross to Calvary.

He willingly permitted them to lift Him up on the tree and when He breathed His last the long exile of God and man was ended. The rupture was forever healed and men and women could once more walk with God in a unique way. Our inheritance from our first parents still remains, the taint of Original Sin. Due to this men and women still make poor choices and find their relationship with God altered. But because of the saving sacrifice of Christ the valley of darkness has been filled and the mountain of obstacle has been made low. The winding path that led us down the road to Hell has been made straight and the rough ways of fear and indecision have been made smooth. Through one unselfish act by God the barriers that separated us from Him have been removed and the path back to full communion with Him has been made simple. We need only to heed the Baptist's cry.

The Baptist's cry has echoed down through the centuries, repent and be saved. The Baptist's cry has echoed more triumphantly in Advent than any other time. And the Baptist's cry calls out forcefully to each

one of us assembled in this place today. The Lord is coming, He is coming to comfort and console us. He is coming to strengthen and bring joy. He is coming to deliver us from ourselves. We can be sure of His coming because we are preparing to celebrate His first coming in a few weeks. So let us repent. Let us repent of our faults and failings. Let us repent of those times we have failed to live up to our election and call. Let us repent of those times we have gossiped and lied. Let us repent of those times that we have not welcomed the stranger or defended the widow or orphan. Let us repent of those times when we have not treated everyone with respect. Let us repent of all of our sins. Because through our repentance, through our turning to God in humility, through our heeding of the Baptist's cry we can be saved and returned once more to communion with God.

This requires us to not only heed the Baptist's cry but the prayer of the Apostle as well. It requires us to increase our knowledge of the Faith, or traditions and scripture, but most importantly our knowledge of

God. It requires us to be more perceptive so that we will know what is good for us and those around us. And finally he prays that we will be able to discern what is of value to us and what will only hinder us. This we must do so that on that day, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ we may be pure and blameless in His sight. My brothers and sisters our Lord made a great sacrifice on our behalf so that we would never have to be separated from Him again. All that He asks of us is to acknowledge our faults and failings, to seek Him with a sincere heart, to ask for His forgiveness, love and mercy. Repent and be saved, our Lord is close at hand.