

*Advent 2015*  
*Prepare the Way of the Lord (2)*

On this second Sunday of Advent, John the Baptist takes center stage. The Gospel says that in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (about 27 AD), the Word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, *in the desert*. It is significant that the Word of God did not make its appearance in the royal court of Tiberius Caesar at Rome, the most powerful ruler of the day. Nor did it make its appearance in the great temple of Jerusalem to any of the high priests. Rather, it made its appearance *in the desert*, to John, the son of Zechariah. God acts in strange and unexpected ways. And so, *in the desert*, far away from the political and religious powers of the day, the Word of God comes to John the son of Zechariah.

Filled with the Word of God, John goes forth and proclaims *prepare the way of the Lord*. Prepare the way of the Lord because God is bringing about a great reversal. Every lofty mountain will be brought low, and every valley will be exalted. That is, the first will be last, and the last will be first, because God is about to bring about a new act of salvation in Jesus Christ.

The prophet Baruch speaks about this salvation in today's first reading. He tells the city of Jerusalem, which has been overrun by its enemies, to put off its robe of mourning and to put on the splendor of God forever; for God is about the return her children who had been carried off to Babylon in exile. The city of Jerusalem will be renewed. The people will be renewed, and all will experience God's salvation once more.

As we hear this text today, we can apply what it says to ourselves and to the Church. God is about to do something new. Indeed God is always about to do something new. But if we hope to embrace God's new act of salvation, we must put off the old and put on the new.

In today's second reading, St. Paul prays that we may be pure and blameless on the Day of Christ, filled the fruit of righteousness. The Day of Christ is that moment at the end of the ages when Christ will come again. It is also the day of Christmas when Christ will come to us in Christmas mystery with a further offer of grace and salvation.

The central theme of today's readings can be summarized in this way: *God is about to bring forth a new act of salvation, and we must be prepared to receive it*. We must hasten to meet the Lord who is coming to meet us. This is how the Opening Prayer of today's Mass summarizes the message of this Advent Season.

Almighty and merciful God,  
may no earthly undertaking hinder those  
who set out in haste to meet your Son,  
but may our learning of heavenly wisdom  
give us admittance to his company.

Advent is a time for us to hasten to meet the Lord, who is always coming to meet us with ever new offers of salvation. John the Baptist summons us to prepare a way for the Lord in our lives. The prophet Baruch tells us to set aside the past in order to embrace the Lord when he

comes in all of his glory. And St. Paul reminds us that we must be ready to stand blameless before the Lord when he comes.

Make this Advent season a time to prepare for the coming of the Lord who will come in the mystery of Christmas and at the end of the ages. *Father Matera*