

Advent 2A 2016

On this second week of Advent, we hear the cry of John the Baptist calling us to reform our life. John is a strange figure. He lives in the wilderness, far beyond the boundaries of polite society, surviving on a strange diet of locusts and wild honey. But as strange as he is, we are attracted by his message. Time is running out, he warns us. It's time to reform our life, he says, because God is about to do something new, something we cannot even imagine, and if we are not ready, if we are not prepared, we will not share *in the salvation God has in store for us*.

The Prophet Isaiah gives us a glimpse of *the salvation God has in store for us*. The wolf shall be the guest of the lamb, the leopard will lie down with kid; the calf and young lion shall browse together. What a vision of salvation! What a vision of peace! Mortal enemies sharing a common meal! Hated enemies living in peace! It is like imagining complete and total peace in the Mideast: Muslims, Christians and Jews living in perfect harmony and peace! How is it? *Is it possible?*

It is only possible if God brings it about; it is only possible if, as St. Paul tells us, we welcome one another as Christ welcomed us. When that happens, justice will flourish in our time, as we sang in today's Responsorial Psalm. But before it happens, we must reform and change the old patterns of our lives so that we will be ready and prepared for God's salvation. For, while it is true that salvation is a gift that only God can give us, *we must be ready and prepared* to receive the gift.

Are we ready for the salvation God offers in Christ? Are we prepared to live on God's holy mountain with people we once considered our enemies? Have we broken down the fences and walls that separate us from each other? Or, are there barriers and fences that still need to be broken down? Are there people with whom we need to be reconciled, people we are still excluding and refusing to let into our life? Are there relationships that need to be healed and nurtured? If there are, then we are not ready for God's salvation. If there are, we will not be able to share in that salvation when at least it appears.

This is why Advent is so important. This is why Advent is my favorite time. It reminds me that God can do what I cannot do. It reminds me that it's time for me to reform my life so that I can accept the gift of salvation that only God can give me. It assures me there is still time to change and reform my own life. It assures me that it is not too late to break down the walls and barriers that separate me from others so that I can dine in the kingdom God.

Imagine the lamb and wolf dining together. Think of the calf and the lion grazing in the same field. Imagine the perfect peace of God's holy mountain and you will understand something of the salvation God has in store for us: a place and a time of perfect peace and harmony. But to enter that place, something must change here and now, and that is why Advent is important.