

Where is God?
Advent 2C 2012
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Where is God? Is God present to your life? If you were to search for God, where would you look? How do you expect God to act in the world? How do you expect God to act in your life?

Many people are disappointed in God. They are disappointed because they do not experience the presence of God in their lives. They are disappointed because God does not act in the way they think God should act. They are disappointed because God does not act in a dramatic and decisive way to deal with the evil and injustice of the world. And so they ask, “Where is God? Why doesn’t God do something?”

I have often met people who find fault with God. I have met young people who are impatient with God and cannot understand why God doesn’t do something about the evil and injustice of the world. I have met older people who cannot understand why God seems to be oblivious to the tragedy and disappointment of their lives. I have met still others who ask, “Why doesn’t God act more decisively in the world, and in my life? And, of course, at moments of sickness and death, we all ask, “Where is God?”

Today’s Gospel can provide us with an answer to these questions, if we listen to it carefully. It begins with a powerful statement that dates the appearance of John the Baptist to the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea, Herod the ruler of Galilee, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas. At that moment in history, Saint Luke tells us, “The word of God came to John the son of Zechariah *in the desert.*”

Notice what St. Luke writes: The Word of God came to John *in the desert, in a wasteland, in the wilderness.* It did not make its appearance in the court of the most powerful ruler of the day, Caesar Augustus. It did not make its appearance in the palaces of Pilate and Herod. It did not make its appearance in the temple of Jerusalem. The Word of God came to John in a remote wasteland, in a howling desert.

If it were up to us, I suspect we would have the Word of God appear in a magnificent and spectacular way for everyone to see. But God’s ways are not our ways. And God acts in unexpected and surprising ways. God comes into our lives when and where we least expect it, in ways we cannot anticipate. This is why Advent is so important. It teaches us to look for God in those moments and places of our life we least expect to find God. It teaches us to wait and hope for the coming of God at those moments of our weakness, our failure, and disappointment.

God is present to us at those moments we least expect, if we open our hearts. God is present in the failures and tragedies of our lives, if we open our hearts. God is present in moments of sickness and death, if we open our hearts. God is present at those

times we least expect because, whether we know it or not, God is always coming into our lives.

The problem is not that God is absent from our lives. The problem is not that God is absent from the world. The problem is that we are not attuned to the presence of God in our lives. The problem is that we cannot hear the voice of God because of the noise that fills our lives. If we hope to hear God, then, we must be attuned to God's presence in our lives. If we hope to hear God, we must be prepared for that unexpected moment when God enters our life anew. We must change our lives so that we can enter into God's new creation.

God is the deepest longing of our life. This is why St. Augustine said that our hearts are restless, and they will not rest until they rest in God. But we often look for God in all the wrong places. We expect something different from what God is already doing in our lives.

Since Advent is a time of waiting and hoping for the coming of God into our lives, it is a time to change our lives so that we can enter into the new life God is preparing for us. As we celebrate this Eucharist, in which we are changed and transformed by the body and blood of Christ, we ask for the grace to be attuned to the coming presence of God in our lives so that we will be prepared for the coming of Christ in Christmas mystery, and at the end of the ages.