

ADVENT MEDITATION

Saturday, December 20, 2008

Luke 3:1-19

Opening prayer – Lord have mercy on me. Walk with me, lead me on righteous paths. Make my heart discerning, my thoughts pure and pleasing to You. Grant me grace to boldly share Your Word in the midst of those who do not know. Help me not to stand in idleness with arms folded or eyes closed with indifference to the needs of those suffering. Lord help me stay committed to serving the Kingdom until Jesus returns. AMEN.

Devotion – Saturday, December 20, 2008

God knows we are only human and the last thing we want is somebody bringing us bad news or telling us what we have done or might be doing right now is of no value. So imagine if you will the reaction John the Baptist must have received to the call to repent and get ready for the coming of the Lord I believe John was probably deemed from a good family, well educated and talented before he lost his mind going fruit loops roaming around the desert preaching a baptism of repentance and forgiveness; crying *prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him*. Those on the front line of ministry know it is not easy being one sent to challenge others to get ready for the unknown, to expect the unexpected in the name of a God ready to change their fate through Jesus Christ. Sometime I wonder whether or not the message would have penetrated if God had sent someone who was genteel or polite, instead of someone with the guts to offend all those who might be offended by the realities of their own sin. Yet, if we examined ourselves we would have to admit there are things we need to change in order to be truly reconciled with the will and way of God.

Advent is a perfect time to contemplate where we have been, where we are, and where we hope to be. Today ask yourself -- *Is the world changing me or am I changing the world?* Making a difference in the world begins with making a difference in your own life. Changing the heart and the mind, for the sake of righteous living, takes more than being born into a family that professes God, reading the Bible, or religiously attending church on Sunday. It takes understanding where and how we are out of compliance with the Word of God. True examination of our life will show how crooked the straight path we think we are walking is and the challenge before us to live a Christian life. In our self-examination we need to include how we expend our time, use our talents, apply our abilities, and spend our treasure. Reflection will help us to find areas where God wants to do new things in our lives. It is expected that God can do great things through us if we are willing even in times of trouble and turmoil, immorality and political change, or in the midst of economic chaos. God is willing and able to make a significant difference in every aspect of our life. For some of us this will mean making a 180-degree turn from sin and a recognition that we need to repent to receive forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation. Some among us will see nothing wrong with how we are living or what we are doing. Those who think we have nothing to repent from, probably need to repent from arrogance and feelings of righteousness.

Closing prayer – Lord, help me meet the challenge of looking at my life to clearly see where I have placed my priorities and my treasure. Help me recognize where I need to make changes to follow the direction You are leading. Help me to tell the story and make a difference among those who need to hear Your Word. In the precious Name of Jesus, I pray You will help me to bear good fruit for the Kingdom of God. Amen.

-The End-

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DEVOTIONAL TEXT

Luke 3:1-19 (New International Version) --- John the Baptist Prepares the Way

1In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— **2**during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. **3**He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **4**As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. **5**Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. **6**And all mankind will see God's salvation.' "^[a] **7**John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **8**Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. **9**The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." **10**"What should we do then?" the crowd asked. **11**John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." **12**Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" **13**"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them. **14**Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay." **15**The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ.^[b] **16**John answered them all, "I baptize you with^[c] water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. **17**His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." **18**And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them. **9**But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done,