

Advent Devotional December 16, 2022

Scripture

Matthew 11:2-15

2 When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" 4 Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. 6 And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. 9 What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

11 "Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and violent people take it by force. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John came, 14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 Let anyone with ears listen!

Devotional

The Rev. Shawn Malarkey, DMin student

Advent has always been billed as a season of dual expectations. We are asked to suspend our rootedness in the present moment as we travel thousands of years backward in time to vicariously await the first coming of Jesus. We are then encouraged to hurl our consciousness forward in time to some hazy future point where our long-awaited Savior returns again in power to establish the Kingdom of God in all its fullness. What if for a moment though, we pull our thoughts back from the past and future and rest fully in our personal and God-touched present?

Our Gospel passage today is all about John the Baptist: John's followers, popular thoughts about John, Jesus' take on John, John's elevation as the last prophet, and perhaps an implied narrative about how early Christians were interacting with those who still considered themselves to be John's disciples. For all that, what then about John? Not past or future, but presently sitting in a dark jail cell, hungry and cold, waiting with eyes wide and heart open for messengers to return with news, his grime-covered hands shaking with anticipation as he hears a door open.

What then about you? Take a moment to separate yourself from past and future anxieties, and rest easier today. What was true for John in his present is true in your present as well. Rejoice, for messengers have already arrived, and the news they bring is better than you ever imagined in your wildest dreams.

Prayer

Gracious God, you know the regrets of our past and the distractions of our future. By the power of your love, hold us tenderly in our flitting and fleeting now, and enable us to live ever more fully in your present, where you live and reign forever and ever. Amen.