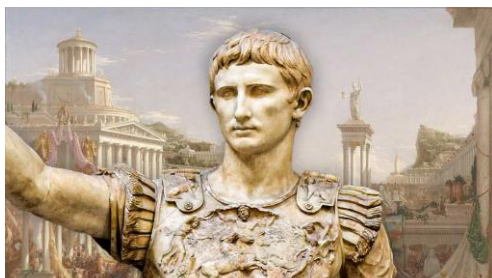


2025 12 07/ Luke 1:5-25, 57-80
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Forever Heralding, John the Baptist



The world Jesus was born into was a world where powerful leaders made grandiose promises of peace and prosperity. It was the era of Pax Romana, enforced through military force. Anyone who resisted was brutally executed on the cross. In that world, the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus declared himself “son of god” and “savior of the world.” To wield greater power than the title of Caesar. The peace and comfort were reserved for the privileged elite and a select few, while the masses struggled, groaned, and suffered under heavy taxes and injustices. However, amidst this fractured world built on illusions, God entered. His word came to the prophet in the desert, transforming everything upside down.

Today’s scripture delves into the beginning of the story. It all started with a notice that Zachariah would have a baby. God is never in a hurry; He always begins with a baby. Luke 1 is quite striking and contains elements that both people find serious and subtly humorous. As Zachariah doubts Angel Gabriel’s message about his wife Elizabeth having a baby, he is struck mute until the baby’s birth. When John is

born, his mouth opens, and he prophesies about the son, who will be a mighty prophet of God like Elijah, who prepares the way of the Lord. John appears in the wilderness in Chapter 3. I want to focus today on John, his central message, and how we prepare Advent.

The beginning of Chapter 3 gives who's who of the powerful: Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, etc. Luke lists all these impressive titles, all these earthly powers who seemed to control the world. It was the worldly stage when the word of God came to John, who was in the desert. We do not know how he grew up. But some believe that John may have been a member of the Qumran community of Jewish Essenes. They lived in the wilderness because they viewed the Jewish religious system as corrupt.

You see, two kingdoms were about to clash. Caesar's kingdom promised peace through power, prosperity for the privileged, and order through oppression. Caesar claimed to be the son of god, the savior of the world. His coins bore these very titles. His empire stretched across the known world, enforcing what they called peace. It was a kingdom built on illusion.

God's Kingdom heralded by John was upside down from everything the world knew. In God's Kingdom, the last would be first. The poor would be blessed. The hungry would be filled. The mighty would be brought down from their thrones, and the humble would be lifted up. This was a complete reversal of the world's values.

John’s main message was “Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” He preached a message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven. He let them know who would be coming after him, about redemption. His voice was fiery like Elijah! He lived like Elijah. He clothed like Elijah; wore camel’s leather. His message was like the brilliant light from Heaven that was about to break into the darkness of Caesar's world.

Repentance: Forward-Looking Call

When John called people to repentance, listen carefully to what happens in verses 10-14. When the crowds ask, “What then should we do?” John doesn't give them a guilt trip about their past. He doesn't say, “Feel terrible about what you've done.” Instead, he gives them practical instructions about how to live everyday moments toward the future. “Whoever has two tunics should share with him who has none, and whoever has food should do likewise.” To the tax collectors who came to be baptized, he said, “Collect no more than what you have been authorized.” To the soldiers, “Don't take money from anyone by force or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

We clearly understand that repentance was about turning our entire life's direction around towards a righteous lifestyle every day. Therefore, repentance was present-life focused and future-life focused. True repentance is never about being trapped by our past. It is not making a guilt trip toward the past, which is another trap of the devil.

When we focus only on past failures trapped by guilt and shame, we remain psychologically bound to the past. When we focus on negativity, we increase the energy of negativity. We get stuck in cycles of shame and regret that actually prevent us from moving forward. Say to God once, “I am truly sorry for the things that have happened. Give me another chance to overcome the darkness within me.” God is waiting and smiling there to hold your hands. When we focus on the righteous identity God gives us, we gain greater freedom to change. We find motivation to live differently and discover hope that empowers transformation. This should happen in everyday moments toward ourselves and others.

Advent Preparation Today

We always face a choice between two kingdoms in our lives. Our world still has its Caesars—systems and voices that promise peace through power, prosperity through selfishness, hope through human achievement alone. We hear messages that tell us that security comes from accumulating wealth, that peace comes from having the right political party in power, that salvation comes from our own efforts and achievements.

But we are empowered by the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. True Christians are superhuman, empowered by God's power. We know that true peace comes from the Prince of Peace. And we have peace in us. We know that true hope comes from God's radical, upside-down Kingdom. True security comes from being citizens of Heaven. So how do we prepare the way of the Lord in our hearts this Advent? How do we live with radical hope for God's future?

1

If you haven't received Jesus yet into your heart, let the baby Jesus be born in your heart. If your Jesus is yet in your brain, not in your heart, then let the baby Jesus be born into your relationship. It should be the living Jesus, not the name that you heard from somebody, or that you read from a book. Let Jesus be your God and friend. He is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

2

Find Jesus in the present moment. Open your eyes of heart so that you may not be enclosed in the perception of self. Open the channel that God may enter your life and hearts. Receive the moments as God is revealed. Of course, everyday moments should be conscientious righteous choices so that the Holiness of God may enter.

In the book, *Voices of Advent*, there is a Rabbi's reflection on the Torah. He chose Deuteronomy 23:12-13, “You shall have a designated area outside the camp to which you shall go. With your spade, dig a hole after relieving yourself outside, and then cover up your excrement.” He explained that the Law of God was all about how to concretely live holy and pure in every corner of our lives because God walks among them.

Righteous living is not necessarily about heroic action. It consists of the daily moment of cleanliness, purity, faithful heart, and merciful heart. It means Faithfulness is made up of daily actions and regular choices. Change and compassion begin here. There, God comes in at the epiphanic moment that turns your life forever. It will let us take root firmly deeper into the new true world order. We need to understand that God's Kingdom would not be just coming someday—it is breaking into our present reality by our awakening choices and by our opened heart and spirit.

3



At the same time, it let us wait for Jesus who would come to the world as majestic King in the future. By the second coming of Jesus, the entire world will be covered by his peace and righteousness just as the water covers the ocean. It is a world where lion and lamb live together without harming. It is a world where there is peace on Earth. We are waiting for the second Advent that will remove the illusory world system forever.

It should not be passive waiting but an active, purposeful anticipation for Christ's coming. It involves inner preparation, keen awareness with open eyes toward the world and others. It is the preparation of the way like bringing hope to others and seeking God's presence in the present moment. We act justly in our business dealings. We live with integrity in our relationships. We treat others as image-bearers of God, not as competitors or obstacles. We become people of radical generosity, radical honesty, and radical love. With open eyes, we will welcome the advent of presence and the powerful epiphany of God into our lives.

The light of Christ is breaking into your darkness. Are you being opened to the light? Is the new order growing in your heart? Is it overflowing towards others? Are you waiting for the perfect world where lions and lambs live together without harming each other?

John's voice still echoes across the centuries: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." The kingdom is here. And also the King is coming.