

**Seedling Group Questions for the 2nd Sunday of Advent: “Like a Fire in the Sky”
(December 8, 2019)**

The sermon can be found at www.lipstosing.wordpress.com

Questions for Opening Up

Who is someone who prepared the way for you in life - personally, professionally, or on your journey of faith?

What is something that you do at this time of the year – a tradition or activity – that prepares the way for your heart to celebrate Advent and Christmas?

Read Isaiah 11:1-10

The prophet shares a vision of a coming future when an ideal ruler will renew David’s royal line (the “stump of Jesse,” who was David’s father). This long-expected ruler will reign with perfect justice and harmony. Which image in this poem describes Jesus particularly well? Why?

We pray these words over a person during their baptism: “Sustain (name) with the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence.” What connections do you see between this passage and baptism? Why would we use these words for this prayer?

Read Matthew 3:1-12

What do you make of the strange figure of John? Why does he dress so strange? Why does he appear out in the wilderness? Why is he so acerbic and combative?

Do you hear John’s message of repentance as good news itself or just preparing the way for the good news Jesus brings?

Putting Things Together

John says to the religious leaders: “Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.” Do you think we ever say to ourselves, ‘We have Jesus as our savior’ and feel too secure or complacent?

Our Prayer of the Day each Sunday throughout Advent begins with the plea for God to stir things up – for God to stir up his power, to stir up our hearts, and to stir up our will – what do you find stirring within you? Within our congregation?

Making It Personal

Joseph says: Jesus is God’s power to gather all humankind into one new family, burning away all the temporary, inconsequential divisions we construct, bringing peace to enemies and this world’s supposedly opposing forces, caring for the poor and outsider, and turning the walls we build into tables. What is one thing you could do to extend God’s radical inclusion? What about something we could do together?

First Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

¹A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

²The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear;

⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

⁶The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12

¹In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

³This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

⁴Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”