

Second Sunday of Advent

A soap manufacturer and a pastor were walking together down a street in a large city. The soap manufacturer casually said, "The Gospel you preach hasn't done much good, has it? Just observe. There is still a lot of wickedness in the world and a lot of wicked people, too!" The pastor made no reply until they passed a dirty little child making mud pies in the gutter. Seizing the opportunity, the pastor said, "I see that soap hasn't done much good in the world either; for there is much dirt still here and many dirty people are still around." The soap man said, "Oh, well, soap only works when it is applied." And the pastor said, "Exactly! So, it is with the Gospel."

Dear Friends,

We celebrate the second week of Advent. This weekend reminds to have a real preparation in our hearts, a real preparation for our own selves. The readings and the liturgy invite us to have a change of heart. We like changes, and yet we don't. Changes are necessary to bring a new world. Lot of times, we want changes according to our wish or need. Think about within five years of time, how much the world has changed. Whether we like it or not, things are changing. There has been a lot of changes in our church. Let us think about how we can change our hearts to welcome Jesus.

In the first reading, prophet Baruch consoles Jerusalem, and from their mourning and misery, they all will be restored. Jerusalem will get a new identity. That was a new life for Israel from Exile. The prophet prepares the hearts of Israel to go into the joyous celebration of new life. He brings up the change that is going to happen in their lives. Baruch's prophecy complements that of Isaiah. God will restore his people to freedom and their lives will prosper.

In the gospel, Luke explains the political power and the emergence of John the Baptist against the secular context of the Roman empire and the religious situation in Judah. The evangelist Luke sets up the frame that God works outside of political and religious powers. "Aside from using these names to set the date for us, Luke includes them to show how far Israel had fallen. Politically, the Jews were ruled by foreigners, and

religiously, Annas and Caiaphas had been illegally put into their positions by the Roman authorities, and constantly used their power to line their own pockets and increase their own authority. Annas was even sometimes called a viper who hissed or whispered in the ears of judges and politicians in order to influence their decisions.” ([Alfred Edersheim](#): “The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah”: New Updated Edition,1993).

Another important role Luke gives for John is that he is a traveling preacher. He prepares the way. This is the invitation of John the Baptist in the words of Isaiah. His proclamation was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. This means the purification of heart with one another and the world. He insisted on the change of heart of each individual.

Isaiah’ words remind us to bring peace and an egalitarian society, where all the ups and downs are fixed to have a straight way for the salvation of the world. Preparing “the way” means to create a favorable environment, or to make it easy for Someone to come to another person and operate in one’s life.

John called people to repent as a way of preparing their hearts and lives for the Lord’s visit. He is calling us, too, to get ready for something so great that it fills our emptiness with expectation. A smooth road means nothing to God, but a repentant heart means a great deal. Hence, the truly important goal for us is to prepare our hearts to receive the Lord. By emphasizing the last line of the quotation “All flesh will see the salvation of God,” Luke stresses the universal aspect of God’s salvation.