

2nd Sunday Advent—December 8, 2024

A man breaks into a house one night just before the holidays while making his way through the house to look for valuables, he comes across a parrot inside of a cage.

"Jesus is watching you" The parrot squawks at him.

The thief looks and sees a small nameplate on the cage that reads 'John the Baptist' "What kind of religious nuts name their parrot John the Baptist?" He wonders out loud, to which the parrot responds, "The same kind that names their pitbull Jesus".

This weekend we read from Baruch in the first reading, a somewhat unknown prophet from the Old Testament. In fact, did you know that the book of Baruch is one of the Old Testament books that is not included in the Protestant Bibles?

The Bible records that Baruch was Jeremiah's secretary, who wrote the prophet's words on a scroll.

Baruch's message (possibly a reflection of Jeremiah) brings a message of hope to the exiled people of Israel. He tells them that God will lead with joy and the light of his glory. What a beautiful prophecy for the people of Israel.

In the Gospel today, Luke tells us about the prophet John the Baptist and how he was preparing the way for the Lord by sharing the good news of the coming of Jesus to the people as well. John's message that we also must prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus in our lives.

How are our preparations coming along during this Advent season? Do we prepare just for the secular celebrations or are we taking some time this year to prepare our spiritual hearts to see God.

My wife Leigh Ann and I were reminded of the importance of preparation just a few years ago while we were hunting. We were just too busy that summer and early fall to practice shooting our bows and we both felt that we were good enough to just pick up the bows and walk out into the woods without any preparation and harvest a deer.

Well, God gave me the first chance to be humbled, a nice buck was making its way into range and when I attempted a shot with the bow, I heard a loud thwack. I was not sure what happened. The buck ran away without any harm. As I looked for the arrow, I found that it was firmly placed into the middle of a small tree.

About one week later, my wife Leigh Ann also had a chance at a nice buck. She drew back at a seemingly very close shot, and oddly enough her arrow met the same fate as mine. She also firmly placed her arrow into the middle of a small tree.

Coincidence? Or was God teaching us a meaning about properly preparing ourselves, not only for a hunt, but for life itself. No matter how good of a shot or good of a person

we think we are, we all need to prepare ourselves. Those arrows along with pieces of the trees sit in our living room as a constant reminder that we need to prepare ourselves for what life brings us. Many of you have heard the old saying, "If we fail to prepare, we prepare to fail".

Did you know that this Advent is different from every other Advent that we ever lived? It is different, because we are different. In the past year, we have all changed. Some of our lives have changed more than others.

** Maybe this past year was a year full of successes, and joys

** Maybe it was a year of failures and sins

** Maybe it was a year of suffering and hardship or the loss of a close family member or a friend

Whatever happened during the past year, it has affected us.

So this week, let us reflect upon this past year and see how we have changed. Then let us ask God how, through those changes, how we have to prepare for his coming this year in a little different way.

Leigh Ann and I learned the lesson through the outdoors that no matter how good we think we are and don't need preparation, we do need to prepare for his coming in our life each year. For Advent is a great "dress rehearsal" for when Christ truly comes to meet us and he calls us home to eternal life.

Let us pray during this Advent that we are prepared when Christ comes to us and we do not "miss the mark".

Deacon Jim