

Scripture Study

Second Sunday of Advent—Cycle C



Opening prayer

Baruch 5:1-9

(Psalm 126:1-6)

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Luke 3:1-6

Overview of the Gospel:

- This Sunday's gospel for the Second Sunday in Advent takes place at the Jordan River where John the Baptist is preparing the people for the coming of the Messiah. Based on the historical data given us by Luke (verses 1-2), it is around A.D. 27-29.
- John's appearance and message (see also Matthew 3) brings to mind that of Elijah the prophet in the Old Testament (2 Kings 1:8). In fact, John is considered the last of the Old Testament prophets, predicted in Malachi (3:23-24) and later confirmed by Jesus (Matthew 17:10-13).
- In applying the prophecy of Isaiah to himself (verses 4-6; Isaiah 40:3-5; John 1:23), John recalls to his listeners the promises of the Messianic Kingdom found in Isaiah chapters 40 to 45, and thus prepares them for the Messiah, Jesus, who is about to come into their midst.

Questions:

- Luke is very careful to note the exact historical conditions surrounding the proclamation by John the Baptist of Jesus' coming (verses 1-2). Why is this important? How does it show that God is active in history—then and now?
- What was John proclaiming (verse 3)? What type of baptism is he preaching and how does it differ from *sacramental* baptism, established by Christ (see Luke 3:11; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:37-38, 19:3-5)? What does Christian baptism do?
- In the context of your Christian relationships (such as family, neighbors, or parish), what does it mean to love "with knowledge and every kind of perception" (see 2nd Reading)? What are some of the "fruits of righteousness" you can expect to experience? (Hint: Look up Gal 5:22–23.)
- What does it mean to "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths" (verse 4)? What is the "way" and "path" of the Lord as he comes into your life—the valleys and the hills (verse 5)? How are they crooked and unlevel? Have we allowed mountains to rise up that block our path to God? Have we created mountains in our lives that keep God from reaching us? Do these mountains of ours block others from reaching God?
- How can you prepare the Lord's ways and paths in your life this Advent in preparation for Christmas?
- What does John mean when he says "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (verse 6)? How has this been fulfilled in Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 2:11-20)?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 522-524, 678, 715-720

Closing prayer

Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them—every day begin the task anew. —*St. Francis de Sales*

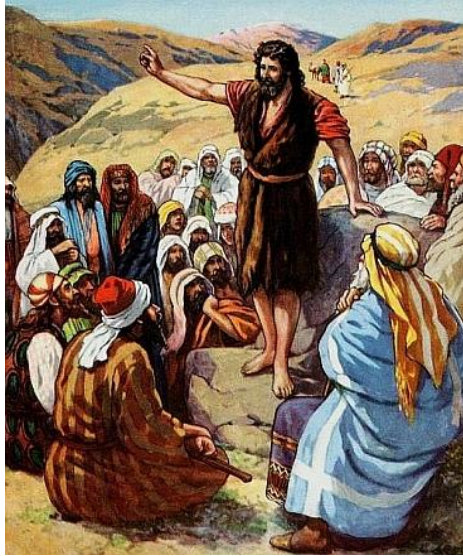
Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"The word of God came to John in the wilderness"

Gospel Reading: *Luke 3:1-6*

Meditation: Do you recognize the word of God and the message which the Lord wishes to speak to you today? Luke the evangelist tells us that the "word of God came to John in the wilderness" (Luke 3:2). Who was John the Baptist and what is the significance of the message which he received and delivered to the people of his day? In dramatic fashion Luke tells us when John came on the world scene. The world's rulers paled in reference to this son of Zechariah, a priest who served in the temple at Jerusalem. John's mission was to prepare the way for God's Anointed King who would come to establish God's rule above all other kings and authorities.

John stood at a pivotal juncture in the history of God's dealing with his people. He bridged the Old and New Testaments, also known as the Old and New Covenants which God made with his people. John was a prophet, a spokesman for God. Luke tells us that "the word of God came to John" when he was dwelling in the wilderness of Judaea (Luke 3:2). John was pre-eminently the servant of the Word, the Word of God who became flesh for our sake and for our salvation (John 1:14). Why was John living in the barren wilderness of Judaea? John was called from an early age to devote himself to prayer and to the word of God. God led John into the wilderness, away from the noise and distractions of everyday life.



There God taught John in the solitude of the desert and prepared him for a prophetic ministry that would turn the hearts of his people to receive their long-awaited Messiah. John is the last of the Old Testament prophets who pointed the way to the coming of the Messiah. He is the first of the new Testament witnesses and martyrs who suffered on account of his testimony to Jesus as the true Messiah and "Lamb of God" who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

In the ancient world when a king decided to tour his kingdom, he first sent his courier ahead to prepare the way. John is the courier and great herald of the Messiah King who proclaims to all the peoples that the impending reign of God is now very close at hand. Isaiah had long ago prophesied the role of the Forerunner of the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3-5). John undoubtedly took

this word to heart as he searched the scriptures and reflected on the word of God in the wilderness.

How can we, like John the Baptist, prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus Christ and his everlasting kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy (Romans 1:17)? John the Baptist tells us that the first step is conversion and repentance (Matthew 3:2; Luke 3:7) – turning our hearts and minds away from sin, indifference, and unbelief, to a sincere trust in God and submission to his word. Luke's gospel emphasizes the universal call of the gospel to all peoples without distinction. He quotes from the prophet Isaiah that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Isaiah 40:5; 52:10). John stood at the door of a new era of grace and salvation. He saw from a distance what Jesus the Messiah would accomplish through his death and resurrection – pardon for our sins, healing and restoration, and eternal life for all who would believe in the Lord Jesus. Are you hungry for the Word of God and do you allow God's word to transform the way you view, think, and live your life?

"Lord Jesus, you are the Word of God and Savior of the world. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and teach me your ways that I may grow in the knowledge of your love and truth. May I bring the joy and good news of the Gospel to all I meet."

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