

Second Sunday of Advent
Year C

Malachi 3:1-4
Canticle 16
Philippians 1:3-11
Luke 3:1-6

How many of you have started putting up holiday decorations? How many have created your shopping list and begun doing your gift shopping? Have you planned your Christmas dinner?

Last week, we explored the idea of waiting - in our daily lives and in our spiritual lives. This week, we are going the next step in honor of John the Baptizer. We prepare. Putting up decorations, doing some shopping and planning Christmas dinner are all part of being prepared. I know some have to get presents in the mail so they arrive at their destination before the big day. And, planning a big meal with guests requires time. So, we prepare.

Advent is a time of preparation. We hear the message of the prophet to prepare the way of the Lord. We hear the message of John to prepare our hearts through repentance. We hear Zechariah telling the infant John that he will “go before the Lord to prepare his way.” In our book study, we see how the angels appear to various people to help them prepare for the most life-changing event in the history of the world. Gabriel appears to Zechariah and then to Mary. The angel also appears to Joseph and the shepherds to prepare them for this momentous occasion. How do we prepare?

The altar guild prepares for Christmas by polishing the brass and cleaning everything so it looks good. We have many ways we prepare our homes, the church, and our families for the coming of Christmas. But, we cannot forget to prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus. How do we prepare?

John came, not to the city or the important, but in the wilderness to the common people. He was not dressed in fine clothing, but in rough peasant garb. John didn't come as a priest or ruler, but like the prophets of old - someone who, though an ordinary man, would attract the attention of all. His message was not wrapped in fancy words, but challenged the people to change their ways. His message did not comfort the people, but called them to repentance.

John tells us the hustle and bustle we put into our preparation for family and friends is not the most important preparation. He calls us to a time of self-examination and reflection. While we might desire that everything in our homes and in the church be perfect for the big day - all cleaned and polished - we also need to spend the time to ensure the temple of God, which is our hearts, is equally cleaned and polished. We need to examine our lives, our values, and our priorities. This is not something to be put off until the guests leave - this commands our attention now, in the midst of our other preparations.

Advent is not a time of rest, but a time to re-examine our lives and our commitments. As we rush around, preparing everything for the big holiday, we need to stop and look into our hearts. Are

we ready for what is coming? Have we prepared ourselves to welcome the most important guest this season?