

Living the Word

MEDITATING ON THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Year C - 3rd Sunday of Advent

A resource for personal, family and community prayer:

“What must we do?”



Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

You are invited to read the Gospel passage attentively, respectfully and reverently as a gift of God.

¹⁰When all the people asked John, “What must we do?” ¹¹he answered, “If anyone has two tunics he must share with the one who has none, and the one who has something to eat must do the same.”

¹²There were tax collectors too who came for baptism, and these said to him, “Master, what must we do?” ¹³He said to them, “Exact no more than your rate.” ¹⁴Some soldiers too asked him in their turn, “What about us? What must we do?” He said to them, “No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!”

¹⁵A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, ¹⁶so John declared before them all, “I baptize you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

¹⁷His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.” ¹⁸As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.

Background to Gospel passage

Where does this take place? John is down at the river Jordan and is baptising and preaching repentance.

When does this happen? This passage follows on from last week’s Gospel of John’s confident proclamation of the imminent coming of God’s kingdom into the world.

Who is there?

- John the Baptist – who was a courageous and compassionate human being, prophet and leader.
- The tax collectors who are collecting tax on behalf of the Roman administration- as a result they were despised and shunned by their own people.
- The soldiers who made sure the people paid up “the people” – those followers of John who were beginning think that he was the Christ.

What happens? In response to the various questions put to him, John’s answers are concrete and practical. He challenges the crowds to generosity in their care for the poor; the tax collectors to honesty and fairness; the soldiers to respect and gentleness. Everyone has a part to play.

The second section gives us a powerful insight

into the spirituality of John the Baptist: he demonstrates wonderful humility and integrity. He knows who he is and what his mission entails. Even though he is doing something good and worthwhile he knows he is not the Messiah- the One who is yet to come.

The winnowing fan, referred to in the last section, was a large wooden shovel used to separate the wheat from the chaff- John is confident that the chaff (evil) will be destroyed and goodness (wheat) will ultimately prevail.

Suggested Guidelines to help you recognise this passage in your life experience.

“If anyone has two tunics he must share with the one who has none...”

Can you remember someone who inspired you to see that God’s compassion, mercy, honesty and integrity are at the core of what it means to be a follower of Jesus?

“I baptize you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am.”

Can you think of a John the Baptist person in your own life who manifests that same humility and integrity and doesn’t pretend to have all the answers?

“His winnowing fan is in his hand..”

Remember life experiences, perhaps painful ones, that have reminded you that what really matters in life is love of God and love of neighbor.

What does this gospel remind me of? Where was it? When was it? Who was there? What happened?

Now I see that God was in that life experience!

Prayer Response - you are invited to respond in prayer in your own words.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for the times when I have experienced this gospel in my life...

Heavenly Father, I am sorry for the times I have fallen short of living this gospel...

Heavenly Father, please help me to live this gospel...



You are invited to deepen this prayer experience by resting your heart silently in God's presence and love. The quiet repetition of a word or phrase from the passage may help you on this journey to stillness and silence.

An Invitation to Reflect

What new insight has the Gospel opened my eyes to see?

Action

This week I will try to live the Gospel by...

Thought for the week

Humble people know that, while what they do is important, everything does not depend on them.

Rest in this truth, hold it in prayer and trust that it will bear fruit in your life.

Children



John the Baptist teaches us that to prepare for Jesus' arrival we must make changes in our lives. He tells us that though we can make mistakes, we must love and care for others, just like Jesus.

Can you think of a person in your life- a parent, grandparent or teacher, who has taught you to love and care for others?

Draw or write about this person and how they taught you to love and care for others.



Father, I thank you for the gift of this story which has opened my eyes to see the loving and caring presence of Your Son in my life.

Action: this week I will try to show love by...

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