

The Second Sunday of Advent YEAR C December 6, 2015

God is always working for restoration and justice in our lives and in our world. In order to open ourselves to this gracious work of God, we need to be aware of the messengers who proclaim God's coming, we need to be willing to do the tough work of heart preparation in order to be transformed by God, and we need to hear the call of God for us to become, in our turn, messengers – voices – of God's Reign.

May our worship this week remind us of God's constant, restorative coming, and may it give us a voice to proclaim the restoration and justice of God in our own corner of the world.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Baruch 5:1-9

Jerusalem, the personified mother of the nation, has stated that the Exile happened because many Israelites did not obey the Law of Moses, but, she has said, God has noted the people's return to obedience to him, so the time of their return to Jerusalem is imminent.

Malachi 3:1-4

Malachi is a book of prophecy directed to the priests in the Temple. Priests have replaced kings as those closest to God on earth, but the priesthood is corrupt. The prophet speaks in God's name.

Luke 1:68 -79

The Song of Zechariah - canticle. Zechariah's song of thanksgiving for God's rescue of Israel, and his proclamation of his son, John, as the messenger who will prepare the way for God's coming.

Philippians 1:3-11

In the verses following the salutation of the letter, Paul thanks God for the Christians at Philippi, for sharing in the community of faith ever since their conversion. He expresses confidence that God will complete, at the end of the era, the transformation to godliness already begun in them.

Luke 3: 1-6

In language first used in the book of Isaiah to foretell the return of the Israelites from exile, Luke tells us that John the Baptist's mission is to prepare the way for Jesus, by inviting people to make new starts in life, to live ethically from now on.

TEXT OF READINGS

http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearC_RCL/Advent/CAdv2_RCL.html

The Second Sunday of Advent YEAR C December 6, 2015

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power
and come among us,
and with great might succour us;
that whereas, through our sins and wickedness
we are grievously hindered
in running the race that is set before us,
your bountiful grace and mercy
may speedily help and deliver us;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit,
be honour and glory, now and for ever.

Or

Father in heaven,
who sent your Son to redeem the world
and will send him again to be our judge:
Give us grace so to imitate him
in the humility and purity of his first coming
that when he comes again,
we may be ready to greet him with joyful love and firm faith;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty God,
purify our hearts and minds,
that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as
judge and saviour
we may be ready to receive him,
who is our Lord and our God.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Presider or deacon

As we prepare the way of the Lord, let us offer prayers to God who will lead us with joy in the light of his glory.

Deacon or other leader

For the peace of the world, and for our unity in Christ.

Come, O Lord, and save us.

For *N* our bishop and all bishops, for the presbyters, for the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

Come, O Lord, and save us.

For the church throughout the world and the faithful in every place.

Come, O Lord, and save us.

For the leaders of the nations and all in authority.

Come, O Lord, and save us.

For justice, peace, and freedom among peoples of the earth.

The Second Sunday of Advent YEAR C December 6, 2015

Come, O Lord, and save us.

For travelers, for the sick and the suffering, for the hungry and the oppressed, and for those in prison.

Come, O Lord, and save us.

For the dying and the dead.

Come, O Lord, and save us.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Come, O Lord, and save us.

Joining our voices with _____, John the Baptist, and all the saints and angels of God, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

O Rising Sun, brightness of light eternal, sun of justice, come and shine on those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Glory to you for ever. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION

Father in heaven,
who sent your Son to redeem the world
and will send him again to be our judge:
give us grace so to imitate him
in the humility and purity of his first coming
that, when he comes again,
we may be ready to greet him
with joyful love and firm faith;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

Purify our conscience, Almighty God,
by your daily visitation, that Thy Son Jesus Christ,
at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself;
who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Book of Common Prayer

Pour forth thy power, O Lord, and come:
Assist us by that mighty power,
so that by thy grace and merciful kindness
we may swiftly receive the salvation that our sins impede:
Who livest and reignest with thee
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Often said while lighting the fourth Advent Candle

Father, all-powerful God,
your eternal Word took flesh on our earth
when the Virgin Mary placed her life

The Second Sunday of Advent YEAR C December 6, 2015

at the service of your plan.
Lift our minds in watchful hope
to hear the voice which announces his glory
and open our minds to receive the Spirit
who prepares us for his coming.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen
From the Companion Missal

Stir up thy power, O Lord,
and with great might come among us;
and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins,
let thy bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost,
be honour and glory, world without end.
Book of Common Prayer

We beseech thee to listen to our prayers, O Lord,
and by the grace of thy coming enlighten our darkened minds:
Thou who livest and reignest with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.
Often said while lighting the third advent candle

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
ever faithful to your promises
and ever close to your Church:
the earth rejoices in hope of the Saviour's coming
and looks forward with longing
to his return at the end of time.
Prepare our hearts and remove the sadness
that hinders us from feeling the joy and hope
which his presence will bestow,
for he is Lord for ever and ever.
From the Companion Missal

Merciful God,
who sent thy messengers the prophets to
preach repentance
and prepare the way for our salvation:
Give us grace to heed their warnings
and forsake our sins,
that we may greet with joy
the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer;
who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Book of Common Prayer

Stir up our hearts, O Lord,
to prepare the paths of thine Only-begotten Son:
that we may worthily serve thee
with hearts purified by His coming:
Who livest and reignest with God the Father

The Second Sunday of Advent YEAR C December 6, 2015

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
ever one God, world without end. Amen.
Often said while lighting the second Advent Candle

Father in heaven,
the day draws near when the glory of your Son
will make radiant the night of the waiting world.
May the lure of greed not impede us from the joy
which moves the hearts of those who seek him.
May the darkness not blind us
to the vision of wisdom
which fills the minds of those who find him.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.
From the Companion Missal

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming give to all the people of the world knowledge of your salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

God of timeless grace,
you fill us with joyful expectation.
Make us ready for the message that prepares the way,
that with uprightness of heart and holy joy
we may eagerly await the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

Out of the embrace of mercy and righteousness,
you have brought forth joy and dignity for your people,
O Holy One of Israel.
Remember now your ancient promise:
make straight the paths that lead to you,
and smooth the rough ways,
that in our day
we might bring forth your compassion
for all humanity. Amen.

God of hope,
you raised up John the baptizer
as a herald who calls us to conversion.
As we joyfully await the glorious coming of Christ,
we pray to you for the needs of the church and the world.
Hear our humble prayer
that we may serve you in holiness and faith
and give voice to your presence among us
until the day of the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Baruch 5:1-9

This book is set during the Babylonian exile (soon after 600 BC) but it was probably written between 200 and 60 BC. It is attributed to Jeremiah's friend and secretary, Baruch. In Jeremiah 43:1-7, both men are reported to have been taken to Egypt (in 582 BC) but a later tradition says that Baruch went to Babylonia. Baruch 1:15-2:19 is largely a rewrite of Daniel 9:4-19, so Baruch was written after Daniel. As is the case with several books in the Apocrypha, most of the book is passages copied or paraphrased from Old Testament books. Jeremiah's Baruch was meticulous; he would not have made the many errors to be found in 1:1-14.

This book is set in the time of the Exile, when some Jews had been deported to Babylon and others had dispersed around the Mediterranean. The author has stated that the Exile happened because many Jews did not obey the Law of Moses (4:12): the speaker there is Jerusalem, the personified mother of the nation. She is a prophet of events to come. God, she says, has noted the people's return to obedience to him, so the time of the return home is imminent. The time of the city's mourning for the loss of her "children" (4:12, v. 5) is nearing its end.

Now the author speaks to Jerusalem. It is time to remove mourning attire, to don forever splendid garments given by God, guarantees and symbols of harmony, security and prosperity. Exodus tells us that Aaron, as priest, wore a "diadem" (v. 2, or *mitre*) inscribed "Holy to the Lord", a symbol of divine regal splendour. Now personified Jerusalem is made a priest of God ("of the Everlasting"), succeeding Aaron, as a sign of God's power. The city will receive two titles forever: "Righteous Peace, Godly Glory" (v. 4). From now on, Jerusalem will be a place where justice and peace prevail and where God's glory will be seen. Vv. 5ff tell of a procession, a pilgrimage to the holy city. The exiles will return from "the east" (Babylon), and from elsewhere, God having spoken ("the word") and remembered them. They departed the city "on foot" (v. 6) but will return regally, as if borne on *thrones*. V. 7 echoes Isaiah 40:3-4: a road will be levelled through the Arabian Desert, so they can return safely. It will be surrounded with trees ("woods", v. 8) which will have miraculously grown in the desert "at God's command". God will be present with them ("in the light of his glory", v. 9), as will "mercy and righteousness", attributes of God.

Malachi 3:1-4

We know of no prophet named Malachi, so it is likely that this book is named after a passage well known in later Judaism: 3:1 speaks of "my messenger", *malaki* in Hebrew. The book was written generations after the people returned to Israel and restored the Temple. The prophet addresses his message of judgement to corrupt priests, and gives hope of a future messenger from God. God will then come to judge, purify, and end the era. This messenger, per 4:5, was expected to be Elijah.

Cyrus, King of Persia, has permitted the people of Israel to return to Palestine. The Temple, gutted in 586 BC, has been restored, but Israel is still a Persian province. People expected that their fidelity to God would be rewarded by (material) prosperity, but life has continued to be hard, so after several decades, they have lapsed into waywardness. It is the ungodly who prosper. In the old days, the king was God's agent, but now (there being no king), the priests have assumed this role. In previous chapters, the prophet has condemned the priests for despising God, corrupting worship and misleading the people.

The Second Sunday of Advent YEAR C December 6, 2015

A “messenger” (v. [1](#)) or angel, God’s agent, will come to prepare a way for him. God, long expected, will come to “his temple”, to the priests. God’s “covenant” with Israel was summed up in the priests. His arrival will be sudden, unannounced. V. [2](#) implies that when God comes, he will judge the people. (The accused *stands* to hear judgement.) A *refiner* used the heat of a fire to separate ore into pure metal and slag; a *fuller* cared for newly shorn wool or woven garments by cleaning them, purifying them, with lye. The messenger will “purify ... and refine” (v. [3](#)) the priests (“the descendants of Levi”) until they hold him in proper respect. Their offerings, on behalf of the people, will then again be “pleasing to the Lord” (v. [4](#)). God will judge adversely those who deviate from proper moral behaviour and from his ways (v. [5](#)). He will bless all who return to his ways, for he still cares for his people. [4:5](#) identifies the messenger as Elijah (who ascended to heaven without dying: see 2 Kings [2:10-12](#)); hence the popular belief in Jesus’ day that Elijah would return: see, for example, Luke [9:7-8](#).

Philippians 1:3-11

Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, a prosperous Roman colony in northern Greece, from prison. We do not know whether this imprisonment was in Ephesus or in Rome. It appears that he was held under house arrest. It is possible that the epistle is actually made up of three letters. It contains many personal references, exhorts members of the Philippian church to live the Christian life and to good ethical conduct, introduces Timothy and Epaphroditus as his representatives, and warns against legalists and libertines. Lastly, he thanks the Philippian community for their material support.

In the verses following the salutation of the letter, Paul thanks God for the Christians at Philippi, “praying with joy” (v. [4](#), a pervasive quality of the book), because of their participation (“sharing”, v. [5](#)) in spreading the good news, “from the first day”, since their conversion. Paul is “confident” (v. [6](#)) that God (“the one”) will finish what God has begun among them by “the day of Jesus Christ”, i.e. when he returns at the end of the era. Paul is particularly close to the Philippians because they “share” (v. [7](#)) in Christian community, “in God’s grace”, with him: in suffering, and in defending and confirming the good news. (At his trial, Paul will have the opportunity to defend the gospel and show its power, v. [16](#)). He longs to be with them with deep affection (“compassion”, v. [8](#)).

Vv. [9-11](#) are his prayer for them: may they grow in love of God through knowing more of the Christian reality, marked by keen awareness of its meaning (“insight”), that they may discern the difference being Christians makes (“best”), so that when Christ comes again, they may be ready - having achieved a right relationship with God (“harvest of righteousness”, v. [11](#)), through being in and with Christ, thus augmenting God’s “glory”, the showing forth of his inherent absolute goodness, and being ideally suited to praising God, rendering him homage, for it.

Luke 3:1-6

Three gospels in the New Testament offer similar portraits of the life of Jesus; Luke is the third of them. Its author, traditionally Luke the physician who accompanied Paul on some of his missionary journeys, draws on three sources: Mark (via Matthew), a collection of sayings (known as Q for *Quelle*, German for *source*) and his own source. It is a gospel that emphasizes God’s love for the poor, the disadvantaged, minorities, outcasts, sinners and lepers. Women play a more prominent part than in the other gospels. Luke never uses Semitic words; this is one argument for thinking that he wrote primarily for Gentiles.

As did classical Greek authors, Luke places an event (John’s ministry) in the context of rulers, here both secular and religious. (V. [1a](#) gives the most precise dating of the start of

The Second Sunday of Advent YEAR C December 6, 2015

Jesus' ministry in the gospels, i.e. 26-29 AD.) "Herod" here is Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. "Caiaphas" (v. 2), Annas' son, is now high priest but his father retains his prestige (and power). The Greek translated "the word of God came" (v. 2) is the same as in Jeremiah: Luke sees John as continuing Jeremiah's role of announcing judgement at the end of the era and a new pact with God, available to all. John travels throughout the Jordan Valley, preaching return to God's ways and being ethically and spiritually renewed, here (vv. 4-6) expressed through metaphor. (These verses are from Isaiah 40:3-5.) Luke makes one change in the quotation: "his" (v. 4) emphasizes that it is Jesus for whom he prepares the way. To Luke, "all flesh" (v. 6), all people, not only Jews, will have the opportunity to be rescued from sin.

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

This week the focus is on prophecies of God's coming, God's restoration, and God's justice and peace. Yet, in each reading there is a call to prepare to receive the promise in some way. In Baruch, the people are called to end their mourning and be ready to receive God's restoration and glory. In Malachi, there is the purifying work that will happen when God's messenger comes, and the people are to seek for, and take delight in, the coming one. In Zechariah's song, John is to be the one who prepares God's people for the coming salvation, and to lead them into forgiveness, which implies that they will respond to John's message and follow him into the restoration he promises. In Paul's prayer for the Philippians he expresses his desire for them to grow in love and wisdom, and to trust that God will complete the work that God has begun in them. Finally, the Gospel narrative of John's coming speaks of John's call to the people to repent and be baptised in preparation for the coming one. The message this week, then, is this: God is always coming, always available to God's people, and always working for restoration. But, receiving God's coming takes preparation, and so God sends a messenger to do this work, to prepare God's people for God's coming. The challenge is for us to embrace the work of preparation for ourselves – opening ourselves to God's restoring, cleansing and disturbing work, and making our hearts ready for us to become, in turn, messengers of God's restorative justice and mercy to the world.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

Global Application:

In a world where measurement happens on a quarterly basis, effective preparation is often sacrificed on the altar of expediency and immediacy. In areas from economics to climate change, poverty, AIDS and conflict we too easily seek "quick fix" solutions that either fail to address the massive systemic issues that really need to be changed, or that work in the short term, but cause other problems in the long term. It is hard to take a long view, to make sure that we get all the information we need, and to do the slow, consistent work of transformation, especially when things so often seem to get worse before they get better. It is hard to prepare carefully and thoroughly when we are constantly bombarded with information, opinions, and alternatives. It is tough to commit to long term solutions when we are suffering and want relief now. But, our need for immediate gratification does not help us or our planet. We need time to understand the systems we have created and to learn how to change them. And then, we need time to implement the changes. In this work of preparation, God's people are called to be both the ones who are being prepared, and the ones who call others to preparedness. We are to be committed to work for God's justice, but also recognise that this will take time, wisdom, and trust that God, who begins the work in us and our world, is the only one who can really bring it to completion.

The Second Sunday of Advent YEAR C December 6, 2015

Local Application:

How much of the day do we spend in reaction? So much pain and injustice is caused simply because we react in fear, anger, self-protection or simply impatience. However, if we can develop a prepared heart, we can more easily slow down, reflect and then act with wisdom and grace. Preparation – particularly of the heart – is restorative. It's a proactive stance that frees us from our selves and our destructive or unhelpful patterns of behaviour and moves us into a life that more easily considers, serves and brings restoration to others. This work of heart preparation includes the constant discipline of repentance, the constant awareness of God's forgiveness and transforming work, the patience to allow God's work to unfold in a time frame that ensures thorough healing and restoration, and the openness to be a voice that helps others to see God's work. In a world of suffering and conflict, it can be difficult to remember and cling to God's promises of justice and restoration. This is why the work of preparation, both individually and collectively, is such an important and constant spiritual practice. Only when we make listening and watching for God's messengers a constant discipline can we perceive what God is doing and cooperate with the Reign of God in our lives.

SERMON OUTLINE

Luke 3:1-6 In the fifteenth year...

Having described the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, Luke moves on to present the historical background for the ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist....

1. Preliminaries 1-2: As a careful historian Luke describes

a) Historical Data: *In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius (c28AD) - when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea (26-36) & Herod was ruler of Galilee, & his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea & Trachonitis, & Lysanias ruler of Abilene...*

b) Spiritual Dignitaries *2 Annas & Caiaphas (son-in-law of Annas who had been deposed by the Romans)..*

2. Preacher 3: *as the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness - his Divinely given call...*

a) His Mission - *3 into all the region around the Jordan...* **b) His Message** - *proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins..* He preached a forthright message of repentance & faith – “Get ready to receive your King”

3. The Prophet 4-6 – John fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah - *4 as it is written in the book... of the prophet Isaiah...*

a) the Voice: *The voice of one crying out in the wilderness the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”* – exactly John the Baptist's ministry!

b) the Valleys - *5 Every valley shall be filled, & every mountain & hill shall be made low, & the crooked shall be made straight, & the rough ways made smooth; & all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”* Cf the preparations required in our day for a Royal Visit! How much more was required for Jesus, the King of Kings & Lord of Lords as He came to fulfil His ministry among us!

By Norman Porteous

SERMON

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”

The Second Sunday of Advent YEAR C December 6, 2015

What the GPS had indicated was a real road was, in fact, a road under construction. He should have known, the man sighed to himself. When he had turned onto the road and left the main highway, there had been a warning: "Proceed at Your Own Risk. Construction Ahead." But the sign gave no information about how long the stretch of construction was.

Just past the turn-off, the surface was paved, but there were no markings, just blacktop. After a few miles, the asphalt gave way to gravel and a thin layer of tar. The smell of the tar and the sound of gravel bouncing up against the bottom of the car got the children's attention. They had been sleeping in the back seat, dozing while the family made its way to the next stop on their vacation. They had slept while their father had driven them through this vast section of forested wilderness on their way to the lodge in a national park where they had reservations. Now they were awake.

"Are we there yet?" "How much farther?"

"We have a ways to go," said the father as he rifled through the glove box looking to see if he still had an old-fashioned map in the car.

When the gravel ended and they hit dirt, he started to worry. It didn't help that they seemed to be the only people on this road, and they had seen no one else coming from the other direction. Worse yet, what at first seemed to be dirt was actually mud. He decided to keep driving and hope that this was just a bad patch – that the "real" road, the passable road, was just ahead.

It was clear, though, that the car had begun to sink. The pinging noise of gravel against the car's undercarriage had given way to a slurping sound as the tires kicked up mud and then were enveloped by it.

"I have to keep going," he thought. "If I can just keep moving forward, we'll be all right. We're way behind schedule, but we'll be all right if we can just keep moving."

But the mud deepened. The car became mired in the mud, sunk right up to the chassis, tires half submerged. He gunned the engine, pretty much expecting the result he got, but he did it anyway, because it was something to do.

He turned the car off.

"What's happening, Dad?" the children asked from the back seat. "Are we there?"

He thought for just a moment about what to say. He considered a lie: "Why, yes we are. Look at this fascinating scenery." Or perhaps, "I was hoping for some real adventure on this vacation, and here it is." He thought about blaming MapQuest or the people who posted such a useless sign. Instead, he told the children they would need to be patient and maybe they could teach him some songs they had learned in school while they waited for some help to come by.

Help came in the form of a tow truck with great big tires that traveled that stretch of road a couple times a day in case things like this happened. The car was towed back to the main road, and directions were given for a much longer, but passable, route to the lodge.

That part of the vacation became known as "the repentance trip" because it embodied so well the definition of repentance – an active turning around, going a new direction, a

The Second Sunday of Advent YEAR C December 6, 2015

change of heart, a change of mind, rather than continuing down the same path, moving in the same direction that is leading nowhere or somewhere dangerous, fast.

Repentance is not the same as remorse or regret. It is not listing all the ways things could have gone differently. It is not wishing you were a better person, that some things had never happened, that bad things wouldn't keep happening to you. It's not feeling guilty or ashamed. It's not feeling afraid. It's not something that leaves us stuck, or standing still, or spinning in circles, going nowhere.

Repentance is about movement, letting yourself be grasped by God, getting new bearings, and relying on God for directions.

The new life that follows repentance, the new direction that comes with a fresh start is what John was proclaiming in the wilderness. John's message is a call to action: repent, turn around, accept help. God is coming to meet you on a road in the wilderness.

And when God comes to us, our response can look like the picture from Baruch: a widow who puts away her mourning clothes and instead puts on a beautiful garment. It's not that sorrow has never happened or that there was not a reason to grieve. She accepts the robe of righteousness and a crown of glory because she trusts that her wholeness and joy lie ahead of her in some future that God is preparing, down a road that God is constructing.

Repentance can happen when you are confronted by something, maybe remorse, maybe disappointment or regret, maybe the sense that you are stuck or spinning your wheels. Maybe it comes from something as small as wishing you hadn't said something, or wishing you could take back an action. Maybe it comes from something as large as the report from the doctor that indicates more tests are needed, and you decide that whether it turns out to be something or it turns out to be nothing, whether you have three more decades or three more weeks, you want that time to count for something, to be something you can offer back to God. Maybe it comes when you realize there are other people with you on your journey and that your decisions affect them too and the wilderness is not a good place to be forever.

Repentance comes in many ways. When God turns us around, offers us a way to get unstuck, move ahead with a new way of life, our response is to say thank you.

-- *The Rev. Amy E. Richter*

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

["Where Your Feet Take You, That Is Who You Are,"](#) Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations.

Luke 1: 78 - 79

<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-where-your-feet-take-you-who-you-are>

["Live Prepared,"](#) the Rev. Dr. John Westerhoff, III, *Day 1*, 2012.

The musical "Godspell" made popular today's Advent theme, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." As a second flame is kindled in our Advent wreath, we are invited as a story-formed people to listen carefully to our story about a voice crying in the wilderness: "live prepared."

The Second Sunday of Advent YEAR C December 6, 2015

http://day1.org/4361-live_prepared

["This isn't the way it's supposed to be,"](#) the Rev. Dr. Joseph S. Pagano, *Sermons that Work*, Episcopal Digital Network

"This isn't the way it's supposed to be." If you have ever felt this way, then you have a sense of the biblical concept of sin. As you may have noticed, it is complex. Two things are actually going on when you say, "This isn't the way it's supposed to be." First of all, you have a sense that something is not right. But there is also a second thing. In order to say that something isn't right, you also need a vision of what things are supposed to be like. So sin, in the biblical tradition, is a derivative concept. First, you have to have some sense of what is right. Only then can you say something is wrong.

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2012/11/20/2-advent-c-2/>

[Reminiscere - a sermon based on Psalm 25:6](#), Arnold Hilpert, from the Lenten Series, "Songs for the Lenten Journey."

There's an old proverb here in the southern United States: "*When you're up to your waist in alligators, it's hard to remember the original objective was to drain the swamp.*" We all have times when it seems we're up to our waist in alligators, flailing around, fearful of predatory persons or forces, unable to remember how we came to this critical moment. This is especially true for God's faithful. As we respond to God's promise of resurrection to new life, a new world, a kingdom coming in which Jesus reigns, we encounter mighty resistance from our own sin, death and the devil. We believers find ourselves 'up to our waist in alligators'.

That was the experience of the psalmist who wrote, "*Remember, O LORD, your compassion and your loving kindnesses, for they have been from of old.*" (Ps. 25:6)

<http://www.predigten.uni-goettingen.de/archiv-7/050220-pr-e.html>

["A Sermon on Psalm 25:14,"](#) Geerhardus Vos, in *Kerux: The Online Journal of Biblical Theology* (Reformed).

The Psalter is of all books of the Bible that book which gives expression to the experimental side of religion. In the law and the prophetic writings, it is God who speaks to his people; in the Psalter, we listen to the saints speaking to God. Hence the Psalter has been at all times that part of Scripture to which believers have most readily turned and upon which they have chiefly depended for the nourishment of the inner religious life of the heart. I say that part of Scripture and not merely that part of the Old Testament, for even taking the Old and the New Testament together the common experience of the people of God will bear us out in affirming that there is nothing in Holy Writ which in our most spiritual moments—when we feel ourselves nearest to God—so faithfully and naturally expresses what we think and feel in our hearts as these songs of the pious Israelites. Our Lord himself, who had a perfect religious experience and lived and walked with God in absolute adjustment of his thoughts and desires to the Father's mind and will; our Lord himself found his inner life portrayed in the Psalter and in some of the highest moments of his ministry borrowed from it the language in which his soul spoke to God, thus recognizing that a more perfect language for communion with God cannot be framed.

<http://www.kerux.com/documents/KeruxV3N1A1.asp>

The Second Sunday of Advent YEAR C December 6, 2015

CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2015/07/year-c-second-sunday-of-advent-december.html), Advent 2, 2015, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2015/07/year-c-second-sunday-of-advent-december.html>

[Gathering](http://www.united-church.ca/planning/lectionary#gathering), from the United Church of Canada. Includes sermon seeds, liturgical ideas, "with children," hymn suggestions, choral suggestions etc
<http://www.united-church.ca/planning/lectionary#gathering>

[Children's Sermon](http://faithformationjourneys.blogspot.co.uk/2012/12/childrens-sermon-dec-9th-2012-second.html), *Faith Formation Journeys*
<http://faithformationjourneys.blogspot.co.uk/2012/12/childrens-sermon-dec-9th-2012-second.html>

[On the Chancel Steps](https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2012/11/13/advent/), children's resources by Frances Woodruff
<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2012/11/13/advent/>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[O Come, O Come Emmanuel](#)
[Love Divine All Loves Excelling](#)
[Hail To The Lord's Anointed](#)
[Messenger](#)
[Clear The Path](#)
[Hark The Glad Sound!](#)
[God With Us](#)
[God Of This City](#)
[God Will Make A Way](#)
[Hear Our Praises](#)
[I Could Sing Of Your Love Forever](#)

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