

The Second Sunday of Advent
8 a.m. only
December 6, 2015
Year C

E. Bevan Stanley

Baruch 5:1-9
Philippians 1:3-11
Luke 3:1-6

Isaiah said, “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The Three readings this morning offer three different perspectives. The Reading from Baruch poetically asks Jerusalem to look for the exiles returning home from their captivity in Babylon. And the roads through the wilderness are to be made smooth so that they can come. The Gospel reading portrays John the Baptist as the fulfillment of a similar prophecy from Isaiah. Only now the road is to be made smooth so that God or God’s messenger can come to us who are oppressed by many things—our sin, our economy, and most of all by the Romans. Finally, in Philippians, Paul is himself in prison and writing to his friends in Phillipi and thanking God for their faithfulness.

Each of us may see our own situation in our own way. Some of us may be waiting for a return. A return of faith, perhaps. A return of children, almost certainly, a return of a sense of God’s presence. A return of health or financial abundance. Other may be waiting for the coming of God to save us, for the one who will set us free, remove our oppressions, whatever they may be. And some of us may be unable to do much ourselves but can still pray and offer thanks for our friends, children, relatives who are out in the world doing wonderful things.

In these few weeks of Advent, I suggest that we are given a gift of preparation. We are invited to consider, what it is we are hoping for. What do we wish God to bring to our lives? And in our own lives or hearts, what are the rough places that need to be smoothed out. What holes may need to be filled? This is time to make a contract with a spiritual O & G. Whether we need to get to God or return home, or we need to make a road for our messiah to come to us. We have work to do.

One of the most useful spiritual exercises is to take time to answer a simple question: What do you want for Christmas? What do really want from God? What do you want the Messiah to do for you when he shows up? For in our deepest longing we tend to find God.