

## Angels Can Fly Because They Are Light

December 9, 2018 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent

In our liturgical pilgrimage through the year of our Lord, the second Sunday in Advent is devoted to the person and message of John the Baptist. He sets the stage for Jesus to come sweeping across the desert scape into the Sea of Galilee where John is baptizing, telling people of his day to “prepare their hearts, open their minds, make room in their life for a new thing that has come into the world.

I seem to be in an extended time where I am conscious of all the clutter and stuff in my life. As many of you are aware, Annie and I made the decision to move out of the home we lived in to raise the boys, and a sundry of others who would join us throughout the years, and move into a much smaller home. When Annie suggested we do this back in August, I was on board immediately. At home, here at church, in my office and throughout the grounds, I am determined to decrease the amount of stored and no longer needed stuff that fills my environment.

Is this what John the Baptist meant? Getting me and you to clean out the closets, garages, and attics in our life? Probably not. But there is a holistic application to John’s message of preparing the way in your life for new evolutions of your life. It is true, that as we settle into a place, a culture, a mindset, a job, a way of living, thinking, and seeing the world around us, it does not take long before our lives are filled and we cease to be wondered or surprised by the new revelations of the divine happening all around us near and far. Why not hear and heed the words of John the Baptist to clear the way, lighten the load, un-clutter the space that encircles your life? Why not make it a recurring discipline in your life’s journey, to unburden life of so much that is collected along the way. And now I am not simply speaking about the stuff, but the attitudes, the hurt, the angers, bitterness, grudges, biases, perspectives...

From the ancient Jewish faith we get the wisdom of how every seven years they were to forgive all debts, release all debtors, forgive all who had hurt or betrayed them. A literal letting go of all that had accumulated over the years to give birth to new beginnings, fresh slates, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> chances and lifetimes. Eternal life in the kingdom of God is not about one life lasting forever... it is about life that is born again and again following death again and again.

I do not believe I am alone when I say we seem to be in a heavy time, collectively, I mean people are sad, concerned, troubled, and even murderous and suicidal. There is a collective wave of cynicism, criticism, faction, and disregard... not to mention anxiety and fear and bearing life threatening diagnosis and tragic news. We are in a time just as John the Baptist was in a time:

*(3:1) In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, (3:2) during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.*

This was a time when the heavy hand of despots filled the seats of authority - and corruption and hypocrisy filled the high places of religion. It too was a time when the people lived amidst violence, greed, and political polarity. People's lives were filled with the stuff of injustice and anger and oppression. And God sends a voice in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord. Make way and room in your hearts again for the gifts of love, of healing, of hope, of goodness, of trust, of kindness, of faith. In the beautiful words from the book of Baruch:

*(5:1) Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God.*

What is Advent, if it is not a time to let go and unclutter the space that is our life? Forgive, release, give some stuff away, clear your calendar. Clean out the storage. Get ready for something new, a different direction, a broader view, a further evolution of your life. Get ready to welcome strangers, nurture the young, be creative, care for the wounded, occupy space that is open and wild inviting you to return into the unknown.

In the Gospels there is a story that I believe is relevant to this idea. A man described as a rich, young ruler came to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what can I do to inherit the kingdom of God?" Jesus first answered, "obey the commandments, keep the Sabbath, and love your neighbor as yourself" The affluent young man responded, "But I have done all these things from my youth." Recognizing the young man wanted a deeper faith, Jesus suggested he sell all of his possessions, give the proceeds to the poor, and follow Jesus. The young man was not ready for such a radical change, and the story says he went away sad.

I doubt you or I could have done any better. But can we not imagine a more moderate and reasonable response when we arrive to times when our life is filled to the brim, but our souls have become empty and we hunger for a deeper and freer walk with God? Heed the advice of the prophets and of Jesus, make way, unload, unburden, release, clear and clean out the storage and living places that have become full and heavy, and make some way for new revelations and evolutions of your life. Give stuff to those who need it more than you. Sell stuff and donate the money or pay off burdensome debt. Free your calendar to follow the passions of your soul. Rearrange your calendar to create times of stillness and contemplation. Redirect your energies to doing good practice hospitality, create some beauty, let yourself be in a place that requires a lot of faith, a little love, and a sense of hope.

I love the misquote of G.K. Chesterton, "Angels can fly because they are light." The actual quote is "Angels can fly because they can take themselves lightly" Either way the idea is there, life inevitably becomes heavy, our lives are full, so full we have lost the ability to fly, to believe, to wonder and dream. Heed the message of Advent and make some way for your life to be born again. Release the stuff and follow the way of Jesus. Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God.

Amen