

REFLECTIONS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ 05 December 2021

The Mount ~ The Residence at Litledale

We enter the second week of Advent, this beginning of our liturgical year. The word “advent” means “coming.” In a sacred way, this time reminds us that creation has come, Jesus the Christ



has come, each one of us exists. And yet, celebrating Advent every year also reminds us that God is still creating, our universe and our Earth are still unfolding. Every time a new blade of grass grows up, a kitten is born, a new baby cries, and a new star emerges, we see God’s co-creating work among us. Jesus who once walked on this Earth is still with us, suffering with us in our pain and rejoicing with us in our hope. And each one of us is not yet complete – each day we grow more and more into the person whom God created us to be, called us to be, nourishes us to become.

Our second lighted candle in our cosmic Advent Wreath echoes this same sense. This week we light the green candle and reflect on the birth and the birthing of the solar system and our planet Earth. Brian Swimme reminds us, “Birth of the solar system – this vast ocean of our solar system is like a womb, that has unfolded over some five billion years to become galaxies and star, palm and pelicans, the music of Bach and each of us alive today.”

Our readings today reflect what has happened, what is happening, and what is yet to happen. The first two readings – from the book of Baruch and Psalm 126 – speak about the people of Judah coming back after the terrible time of their exile in Babylon. We note that the exile lasted forty years. The life expectancy of the people of that time was less than forty years. Therefore, almost every person who returned from exile was born in the foreign land, not in Judah. They learned from their parents and elders about their homeland and their God who promised them that they would return.

Baruch is one of these books of the Old Testament which is considered canonical by Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholics but is considered a holy book by other Christian faiths. Baruch, the word means “Blessed One” in Hebrew, was the scribe for or secretary of Jeremiah (we meet him several times in the book of Jeremiah). His words today are filled with hope for the people: “Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God; put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting. . . see your children gathered from west and east at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that God has remembered them. . . God will bring them back to you. . . The woods and every fragrant tree have shaded Israel at God’s command. For God will lead Israel with joy, with the mercy and



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righteousness that come from God.” Can you imagine how these words resounded in the hearts of the people as they waited for their return home!

Psalms 126 is well known to us. Now the words of Baruch have been proved true. “When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, ‘The Lord has done great things for them.’” God has remembered the people. They are coming home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves – a wonderful image of the harvest of hope.

This image of the harvest is echoed in the reading from Paul’s letter to the Philippians, “You may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness.” Paul tells them and us, “the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. . . this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight.”



John the Baptist Preaching in the Desert
Jesus MAFA

In the Gospel from Luke, we encounter one of the great Advent people, John the Baptist, whom we first meet when he is born. Every morning we pray his father Zachariah’s prayer (the *Benedictus*), “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare God’s ways, to give knowledge of salvation to this people by the forgiveness of their sins.” (Luke 1:76-77). There is a wonderful irony in the listing of all the important people who are leaders of the most powerful lands of their known world. The one who is sent to herald

the coming of the Incarnate one is not one of them but John, the son of Zechariah, who lives in the wilderness.

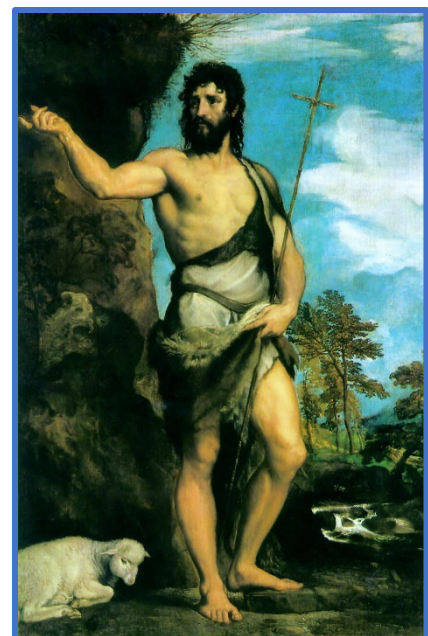
The wilderness or desert for many is a threatening place, a destabilizing place, a place on the edges, but also a place of possibility, a place away from everything that structures and dominates. Delores S. Williams, the womanist theologian, in her book *Sister in the Wilderness*, speaks of the wilderness as a place of resistance, survival, and transformational encounter with Jesus, a place away.

This prayer reflection by [John Birch](#) speaks of this simple man, whose voice coming from the wilderness, helps change the face of the Earth

In the lonely places, the wilderness
Where we stand forlorn windswept and alone
Your voice calls out, Prepare a way for the Lord

In the dark places, the shadows
Where we hide our fears and embrace our tears
Your voice calls out, Prepare a way for the Lord

*By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,*



*to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace. Luke 1:78-79*

As the rising sun comes to us each dawn
Shine upon those who live in darkness
That all might know the joy of our salvation
The forgiveness of sins and your great mercy

For the desert places in which we walk
The streets we roam, the paths we cross
Guide our feet, take us to places where you would go
Give us words that you would use
That in this Advent season of promise and preparation
We might point the way with John the Baptist
To the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

