

Taking Our Hearts to the Lord

Scripture Sharing Group Resource, Advent 2023, Week 2.

Reader 1: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark (Mk 1:1-8)

A voice cries in the wilderness: prepare a way for the Lord

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet

Isaiah: "Look, I am going to send my messenger before you;
he will prepare your way.

A voice cries in the wilderness:

Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight,

and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, "Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader: Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

Everyone: A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader: Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2: Reflection on the Gospel

By any measure Mark presents us with a rather stark beginning. Very quickly he directs our gaze to John the Baptist as the fulfilment of the above prophetic word of Isaiah, and almost as quickly, has John deflect our attention away from himself to Jesus as the one who offers salvation.

You and I most likely know the joy of removing a smudge from a window or windscreen so as to experience a better view? Being human we most likely also have our difficulties and dilemmas ... and hopefully we allow them draw us closer to Jesus. In a world of multiple smudges, dilemmas and challenges it can be good to take stock, and in the words of poet, Brendan Kennelly, to 'begin again'. Indeed this is one of the key invitations of this Gospel passage, but in our case, is it necessary for us to journey into the wilderness?

With the passage of time I have come to know the truth of the Chinese proverb, 'Much of what we see is behind the eye'. It reminds me to consider the filters I apply. While God, in God's graciousness, continues to use the wilderness as a place of new beginnings, might our time together also afford us opportunities to humbly turn toward God so as to invite God to breathe God's life into our minds and hearts?

Lord, please help us not to consign John the Baptist's word to history, but to see in them your invitation to turn to you, to empty ourselves of all that detracts from your life within and with us. Amen.

Silence

Leader: I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or reflection.

Sharing

Leader: Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

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