

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.

LOOK

Describe in a word your experience of Advent this year. What are you waiting for? Explain.

BOOK

Luke 3:7-18

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by

saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

- 1) Prophets are not fortune tellers or forecasters. They are truth-tellers. They 'analyze the now in order to move toward a different future'. Refresh your memory of last week's scripture Luke 3:1-6. What is John warning us about?
- 2) Why did John admonish the people not to rely on their ancestry? What would be the modern day equivalent of this warning for us?
- 3) How does John instruct the people to change their lives? What will make their lives fruitful?
- 4) Is John suggesting something new or difficult?
- 5) How is this good news?

TOOK

In this gospel, John shows us an honest and straightforward course of repentance:

Take stock.

In this festive season, we still carry the weight of our lives. What is heavy or dark in your life right now? Are there ways in which you feel stuck? What are you waiting for? We can't appreciate the light until we have fully experienced the darkness.

Admit we need help.

Share the ways in which you need a savior. Repent means 'turn around'. How can you turn back to God? What burdens do you

carry that you can turn over to God? What gets in the way of your letting them go?

Go back to our lives and bear fruit.

John does not instruct the people to stay with him in the desert or study theology in order to bear fruit. He tells them to go back to their lives and live right, to share, feed, play fair, and be kind. For some of us, this is not good news. How is this transformative? How can it be transformative for you? What will be different?

We will find God in the everyday fabric of our lives, in the heartbreaks and pain and struggles. Waiting with eyes open is hard. How does God strengthen you to do what God calls you to do? How can you tap his strength?