

Advent #2

12/6/2020

J.V. Trautwein

Vicar Karen Pugatch

Celebrate (Introduction)

“John calls people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing gets in the way of the Lord’s coming. The reading from Isaiah gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent; the promise that the coming one will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us all to be heralds with John, to lift us our voices fearlessly and say, ‘See, your God is coming!’ We say it to one another in worship, in order to say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Come, Ye Disconsolate”](#)

Psalm 85, 1-2, 8-13

Lord, you were favorable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

²You forgave the iniquity of your people;
you pardoned all their sin.

Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people,
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.^[a]

⁹Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

¹¹Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
and righteousness will look down from the sky.

¹²The Lord will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.

¹³Righteousness will go before him,
and will make a path for his steps.

Hymn of Praise: [“Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Isaiah 40:1-11](#)

2nd Reading: [2 Peter 3:8-15](#)

The Gospel: [Mark 1: 1-8](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy”](#)

The Angel Tree , Advent Wreath, and The Message ([Video Link](#))

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Thus begins the ancient Hebrews story of the beginning of the universe and life. It is a beautiful and even poetic account of the beginning the world in which we lived as seen through the eyes of this ancient people. Everything was beautiful and pleasing to God for it came from His hand. Then He came to the sixth day and the world He had created began to experience the other side of good, the glitch in the whole scenario, evil. Of course on this sixth day He created man who was given the freedom of will, the ability to choose between good and evil, the independence to select between his own will and desires over against the commandments and will of God.

The perfect universe now had the perpetual glitch of knowing both good and evil and the ability to stand over against God. To have such ability gave a sense of power and supremacy of oneself. This power was further enhance by God giving man dominion over this creation. Man then became ego struck leading him to conquer anything which got in his or her way. The need for self-preservation became an excuse to fulfill all desires even at the cost of the disruption of the overall good and the expense of everyone else. The pursuit of what is good for me was the outcome, even if this was against God’s commandments centered upon love. The glitch to good is what is called sin. The inherent nature of man to succumb to choosing against God’s will is called original sin.

This original sin is inescapable while in human form. In reality some would deny sin and believe that mankind’s shortcomings are totally unavoidable so why be held accountable? Others would say that they are above sin and only seek to do good. Still others do not want to be reminded of sin for it only tears down one’s self image and ego. The truth is that it only takes living through one day in order to see the inescapable reality of sin within all of mankind, even within what is conceived as the best of mankind — even within you and me

But this glitch in God's creation is not without a resolution nor does it need to be doom and gloom. Within this scenario, God gave man the ability, or better yet, the way to rectify the continuing glitch which mankind experiences. Rectification is found within the ability to be repentant or to say I'm sorry. Repentance first acknowledges the possibility and probability of being sinful. This is based upon having the belief, through faith, that God does exist and is the very essence of the continuing creative process, of life itself. Within this belief is the acceptance that what may be seen as a glitch in the creative process is in truth an act of love. Without the freedom to choose there cannot be love since love is all about choice. Therefore by the nature of love and the reality of God's love, this glitch was not a glitch at all but an act of God's love. This came true in the fact of Jesus. For this love to be returned there must be the freedom to either love or reject.

This love of God acknowledges that, all too often, given the choice, mankind will follow his or her basic instincts to choose self-interests over God's will. The resultant state is that of rejecting God or sin. This is when repentance becomes the basic factor in repairing the glitch which is a reoccurring presence in our lives. Repentance is the first step in order to regain the forgiveness and thus the reality of God's love in our lives. This is what the prophets and John the Baptist repeated over and over again. The first step towards coming face to face with God and the understanding of His love is repentance. Isaiah stated "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness; 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" This voice was to be John the Baptist. Within this voice the first step in preparation was made very clear. "John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."

Repentance prepares us to receive forgiveness and opens our lives to receive and live a continuing relationship with God and an understanding of His will for us as seen in the Incarnation. Repentance therefore is vitally important since without it there can be no forgiveness and without forgiveness there can be no relationships, no less any understanding of God's will. Think about it. Relationships have no future when one party wrongs the other by never acknowledging the wrong nor saying I'm sorry, nor asking for forgiveness. The ill will, hurt, and mistrust created breaks down the relationship. It is as if the person who was harmed has no feelings or is not worth being considered as being equal. Being so rejected breaks the bonds of love. Without repentance there cannot be forgiveness and without forgiveness there cannot be healing and the fulfillment of love.

This is a lesson for all relationships which is often a very difficult one to actually live. Instead we so often live a life of grudges, resentment, revenge, mistrust, hurt, and even a sense of inferiority. The glitch of mankind is all too real because repentance is seen as being weak and ego damaging. Therefore, we rationalize through being dishonest with ourselves and with others. This ultimately leads us down the dead end path of broken relationships and denial of God's love. The first step in repentance is being honest with oneself. We must constantly confront ourselves, our thoughts, words, and deeds in light of the love of God as shown to us through Jesus. We have to come to the difficult point of saying I don't know everything, I don't always act in love, and I make mistakes for I am not perfect.

In a strange way I learned this lesson through the many construction and renovation projects I have done in my life. I found that I was perfectly capable of making mistakes, some of them very glaring mistakes. Not to have admitted to these mistakes by acting as though they didn't exist would have resulted in a botched job, a job which would always be seen as poorly done. On the other hand, upon acknowledging the mistake and then taking corrective action, the finished product could be beheld with satisfaction and even pride. By the way, some of my most creative work came out of correcting mistakes.

In a very real sense this is repentance. One definition of repentance which I have read states, "It (repentance) includes an admission of guilt, a promise or resolve not to repeat the offense; an attempt to make restitution for the wrong, or in some was to reverse the harmful effect of the wrong where possible." Repentance therefore, is not only saying or being remorseful and asking for forgiveness but is the attempt to correct or make up for the wrongs incurred. Furthermore it is making the commitment not to let the same mistake occur again. This is all well and good but if these acts are not met with forgiveness then repentance remains unanswered and the relationship remains with barriers to overcome.

This is our human experience. But, to the contrary with our relationship with God, since God's grace, His love, has no ego nor is it deaf to honest repentance. This grace is beyond making restitution through penance or works for His love is there, always reaching out with forgiveness to those who acknowledge their sin and are truly repentant. The glitch in the creation of mankind is overcome with the knowledge that God initiates a relationship of love and is always there awaiting our honest desire to restore this relationship through repentance.

This is the first step in the preparation of the Advent season; the first step in which we prepare to meet Him face to face; the first step before we are able to come to the manger to receive the Good News of God's love through His Son, Jesus the Christ. Therefore, repentance is the core to the Advent season. So, "Prepare the way of the Lord make his paths straight." Prepare by receiving forgiveness through repentance; then the advent season will reap its rewards.

The Anthem: ["On Jordon's Bank the Baptist's Cry"](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line Giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Our gracious heavenly Father, we come to you with penitent hearts filled with the realization that we have fallen short of living the love you have shown us through the life of Jesus. Grant us the will and even courage to be honest with ourselves and with each other so that we may be

able to say I'm sorry when we go astray. When we have been wronged strengthen our love to be able to get beyond revenge in order to say I forgive. We are thankful that when we go astray that you are always there with open arms of forgiveness.

We pray that our nation may find the power to forgive and to find truth in being honest.

We continually pray for all those who are giving of themselves by comforting and bringing life-saving procedures to the sick and dying. Let each of us understand the sacrifice they are making and be thankful for their service. Grant to us patience and the will to follow guidelines in order to slow the spread of this deadly disease.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, Katie Hawkins, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Word of God, Come Down on Earth"](#)

We are discontinuing in person worship services on Sundays until further notice. The online worship experiences will continue as well as the Midweek Thoughts.

Bible Study with Vicar Karen Pugatch, Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30PM more information attached below.

*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill

10274 Raleigh Tavern Road

Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church

9122 Sybert Drive

Columbia Hills

Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291

Zoom Bible Study

Meeting ID: 941 432 0826

Password: 300maple

OR

By Telephone: (929) 205-6099

Meeting ID: 941 432 0826

Password: 914022