

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE STRAIGHT HIS PATHS

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Advent, however, is not a call to recognize our sin, which it is, but it is an invitation to change our lives. The hardest thing in the world is perhaps to change our lives.

But this is John the Baptist coming out of the desert, the last of the great prophets. It's been over a hundred years since the people of Israel, the children of Israel, had seen and heard a prophet.

And he is very recognizable, because he is dressed like Elijah the prophet, the clothes are Elijah the prophet, the words are the excitement of Elijah the prophet — the greatest prophet who never wrote a word but was the greatest and the first of the great prophets of Israel.

And they all have the same message. The Lord has come. Prepare yourself for the coming of the Lord. Prepare yourself. Make straight His paths.

What he means by that is straighten yourselves out. Make straight His paths.

I remember a very good explanation of the real meaning of that “make straight His path” is the Chinese saying about certain people are all crooked and turned. It's a very good description because that's what we very often are.

What is the opposite of that?

Being honest with yourself. Being truthful to yourself. Don't lie to yourself. Don't pretend to be something that you're not.

Make straight the path, so that the Lord can come and nestle into your hearts and make you transparent and open, make you no longer afraid to be what you really are, because in His eyes you are much richer than you yourself could buy and much higher in His eyes than you yourselves make yourselves to be among men.

It is indeed God Himself who comes to walk down the straight paths and into our hearts.

And what we must do, what we must be, is honest. Very simple. Be honest with each other. Be honest with the way you look at the world, knowing that the world needs honesty, it needs truth.

Albert Einstein used to say, when he was told that the Declaration of Independence in America was “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,” he used to say the pursuit of happiness is for idiots.

That's kind of startling. But what he meant was this ...

They said, “Well, what should we pursue?”

He said, “You should pursue truth. You should pursue beauty. Not running around trying to be happy, happy, happy, buying things, doing things that will make you happy, happy, happy. Because they're never going to make you happy.”

“But if you pursue truth, if you pursue the things that are really what your own hearts hunger for — love, forgiveness, compassion — these are the truths that are worth laying your life down for.”

And that is what Jesus comes to give you. He comes not only to teach us; He comes to live it. Love, self-sacrificing to the point of death.

And this is what John the Baptist was saying.

He is saying make straight the paths because God Himself is coming.

And He is going to take you into a world that you cannot dream of. But it will be a world very unlike the one you're in now, living in fear, constant threats, all these things. And He will make you safe. And He will make you whole.

And, of course, this is the promise of the Messiah, who comes to heal us, to save us, to teach us how to live, to teach us how to become what He himself has planned that we will become. God has come to make us human and not ashamed of it, that we might become divine and rejoice in the new life that He comes to give us.

So this Advent is not a time of groaning. It's a time for recognition that John the Baptist stands before you and says, “This is your God Himself.

“The One who created you, who loves you and will give you everlasting life, is coming. It's time to choose.”

And what do you choose?

You choose to be truthful, to be honest, to care, to share and to understand that the God who is coming has already come.

And He is going to bring you to the next step.

And the next step is that He is going to make you a person who knows by living your life throughout the world, by living it in honesty and care, by living it in the way you deeply want to live it in your own hearts, that you will become a messiah to the world.

For Jesus is a Messiah who has come to create messiahs. He is the Son of God who has come to make sons and daughters throughout the world.

And so, it is this Christmas we should already be full of joy and peace and happiness.

But it must be a human choice.

And the choice is not out of fear, not out of dread, not out of anything to keep the little bird hanging on to the bough.

The only way is to learn to love, and to learn the lesson that is given to us to learn, and, each day, that we too might become one with the little Child, one with the Messiah, one with the Savior of the World.

Amen