

December 9, 2018

2nd Sunday of Advent

Lord, guide us in repentance!

Baruch 5:1-9

Psalm 126:1-6

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Luke 3:1-6

Jerusalem is told to stop its mourning and misery because God is leading Israel into joy by the light of his glory which is accompanied by mercy and justice. Its splendor will be shown by God to all and its children will be brought back from captivity on a road made straight by God.

The psalmist describes how joyful and happy the returning captives are in the realization that the Lord has done this great thing. At one time they were led off in tears but are now returning with great joy as they ask that their fortunes be restored.

Paul prays that the brothers and sisters in Philippi will have their love increase in knowledge and in perception. He asks that they be able to discern what is of value and be pure and blameless on the day of Christ. Paul's prayer is given with the affection of Christ Jesus.

The word of God came to John who began to proclaim a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He repeats the proclamation of the prophet Isaiah concerning the preparation of the way of the Lord. The new paths are to be leveled, straightened, and made smooth and all mankind shall see the salvation of God.

The words of the hidden Father flowed in and
through John bringing the realization of the Son,
Who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.

John is proclaiming that repentance is a most important interior disposition because without it there cannot be true forgiveness. We can level our pride, restore our humility, and get directly to the point without beating around the bush. As with Paul let our prayer be to discern what is of value as our love grows for enemy as well as friend.

John the Baptist had his own strong ideas on what comprised a proper religious attitude. His rousing comments to the crowds that were attracted to him in the wilderness eventually even drew Jesus. John's message of repentance concerned the underpinning men must have if they were to face the coming Kingdom of God. What is astonishing is that his message appealed even more to those in society who were not considered religious and were considered sinners by contemporary leaders; it emphasized kindness to those in need, honesty in business dealings, honor among the military in treating civilians, humility in social standing, truthfulness that could be depended upon in all situations. John had no patience and did not mince words toward hypocrites who wondered why they too should be called to repent and prepare themselves for God's coming judgment. These were the "vipers" that were stinging each other even unto death with their hateful behavior towards others and their self-satisfied pride. John recognized that sin is more than simply violating God's commandments. It is more like a low-level infection within our very being that hinders coming to our full health potential. Repentance is the first step in healing and salvation and that is what John emphasized.

