

HOMILY ADVENT SUNDAY 2 (Homily 02)

“Seeing Salvation”

(Baruch 5:1-9; Psalm 126; Phil 1:3-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6)

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“And all flesh shall see the salvation of our God.”

Repent, receive forgiveness and salvation is yours.

There is a beautiful and powerful progression in today’s readings for the second Sunday of Advent that can make all the difference in our lives.

In the first reading, Baruck, who was Jeremiah’s secretary, prophecies hope to a people facing a desperate situation. His words were written in Babylon after the deportation around the middle of the first century, between 200 and 60 B.C.E., and sent to Jerusalem to be read at liturgical gatherings. This is a prophetic passage in which a personified Jeremiah speaks to the exiles and the prophet consoles Jerusalem with a reminder of messianic hopes. There will be renewal and restoration and a return from exile someday that will be an ultimate experience of glory and beauty and splendor. The wildest dreams of the exiles will one day come true.

In the gospel, we see that prophecy beginning to be realized, though not in a way that anyone would have imagined. The Word of God comes, not to kings, but to a prophet in the desert, who wanders around the margins of the region proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. No one at that time could possibly have made a connection between this wild character in the wilderness and the words of Baruck. Such is the mystery of God’s ways in our world.

We, however, are privileged to be given the eyes of faith and the gift of history. The prophecy of Baruch can be realized in our lives here and now if we but understand and believe. The key to this glory and splendor of God, to seeing or rather experiencing salvation, lies in embracing fully the mystery and wonder and depths of a radical, heartfelt genuine repentance for our wrongdoing, and receiving God’s forgiveness through the love of the Lamb of God that John the Baptist would present to the world. It is as simple as that, and as incredible as that.

The one who caught this mystery and clung to it with a tenacity that only personal experience and deep conviction could muster was St. Paul. In the second reading addressed to the Philippians, it is obvious that Paul was already enjoying what Baruck was writing about. He is filled with joy as he saw his beloved Philippians following his footsteps, putting their complete trust in Christ as he did, and growing daily in their experience of that same mystery of salvation that is ours through faith, repentance and forgiveness. Paul prays that they might continue to grow in this knowledge and insight into the mystery of realized eschatology, that they may be pure and blameless, living lives of righteousness or Godlikeness in Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, these words of St. Paul are addressed to us. Today we are to be the one's who understand the mystery, who have the faith to repent, to let go of any sin in our lives, to be freed from any sinfulness that makes us sin, so that we can be filled with the peace, joy, glory and splendor of Christ and live lives that are already an expression of what it is to live in the reign of God.

Our mountains of false pride must be laid low by humility; our valleys of selfishness must be replaced by sacrificial love; our crooked ways of stubborn self-will must be straightened out by a vulnerable openness to God's will, and our rough ways of anger, resentment and vengeance must be smoothed over with understanding and forgiveness. Then and only then will we be able to enter into this mystery of seeing and experiencing salvation right here and right now.

Someone who has caught this message and is sharing this experience is David Wells, a well known educator from England. He was keynote presenter at a Catholic Connections Conference some years ago in Saskatoon. Full of faith, joy and enthusiasm, his was a delightful power point presentation on the power of a life of faith in Jesus Christ lived to the full. At one point he shared an incident when he was watching his three kids playing in the back yard one day. His two boys were helping their little sister climb up a stump of a tree. They were wrapped up in having fun, laughing, being together, living life to the full. Then it hit him that this was a kingdom moment – as a parent this is as good as it gets. This is what it is all about – what life should be, and he was there to witness it.

The Eucharist that we share today is the greatest prayer we have. It calls us to repentance, extends forgiveness to us, heals us in the depths of our being and transforms us into the Body of Christ, the glory of God, sent out into the world to spread the Good News of salvation present though not fully realized.

So on this Second Sunday of Advent, let us not just hear these words, but listen to them, take them to heart, believe and genuinely repent, and we will also see the salvation of our God.