

livingtheword

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Hearing and Living the Sunday Readings

Reading 1 Is 11:1-10

On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide, but he shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land's afflicted. He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips. Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the cobra's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair. There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea. On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out, for his dwelling shall be glorious.

Reading 2 Rom 15:4-9

Brothers and sisters:
Whatever was written previously was written for our instruction, that by endurance and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Reflection Process / Questions

- 10 mins Reading - underline a word or idea that strikes you
 - 10 mins Writing - write what you have heard, write your response to a reflection question(s) that attracts your attention
 - 10 mins Sharing / Praying - share with a friend or pray to God about livingtheword you have heard.
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- Advent Story. Hands Up! Anthony De Mello. Some years ago a great retreat preacher came into a crowded room of people who had traveled great distances to be on retreat. The preacher came to a microphone and asked: Hands up those who want to go to heaven? Immediately all hands waved in the air. The preacher then asked: Hands up those who want to go now? No-one put their hand up. He said 'you might like to spend the day thinking about why you are not ready now. And with stunned silence he left the room.
 - The prophet Isaiah had ministered to 4 Kings who chose not to listen to him. From his heartache and silence emerged the prophecy of a Messiah, a future king, an 'ideal leader', who will bring about a complete transformation. The lion, lamb, calf, baby, cobra will all be at peace together. Enemies will be reconciled. This Kingdom of heaven needs to be liberated from being just an 'idea' into a daily lived reality. This image and reality of peace is to be glimpsed by the world in our christian community. What image strikes you most? What is a 'modern day image' and how could you bring it to a lived reality?

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I say that Christ became a minister of the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, to confirm the promises to the patriarchs, but so that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written: Therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing praises to your name.

Gospel Mt 3:1-12

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: A voice of one crying out in the desert, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.

John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

- Paul's community in Rome is divided. Gentile converts do not consider it necessary to observe the Jewish law. Jewish converts wish to hold onto many of their customs and traditions. At gatherings they are offended by each others liberalism or conservatism. Paul invites them to focus on what they have in common. Do you experience any division in your community? What would it mean for you to 'think in harmony with one another... and with one voice glorify God'?
- They say of John the baptist: He is admired from a distance but watch out when you get close! Repent! is his cry and message. In the original Greek the word is Metanoia. Meta - change. Noia - mind / thinking. It is often linked in scriptures to both personal and communal conversion to bring about a social reconstruction of society. Everything is to be made 'right' 'repaired' 'turned to God's way'. Identify something you want to change personally and communally - producing 'good fruit'. Write this in a place you will often notice during Advent.
- 'Preparing a way' involved making a road for a King or special visitor to visit. Immense work was involved in lowering hills, straightening roads. Just think of the earth moving equipment needed today! What spiritual hills, emotional obstacles, pride, stubbornness, needs moving to let God in and be welcomed joyfully into your life and home this Christmas?
- The Jordan is very symbolic. It is away from the religious institution of the Temple in Jerusalem. It symbolises the crossing of the Jordan of the Hebrew people many years ago. It speaks of becoming a chosen people again. Wiping the slate clean. Starting over! It is a critique of religious institutions that have failed to produce 'good fruit'. Would you be willing to go and visit John at the Jordan. How would you respond to his challenge?
- A fire awaits for those who do not bear good fruit. No claim to 'belonging to Abraham' will work. Worried?
- What is one action that you will do to 'livetheword' this week?