

FAITH @ HOME

Week of December 6, 2020

Second Sunday of Advent

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Mark 1:1-8

REFLECT: I LOVE Christmastime! I love singing Christmas Carols. I love making Christmas cookies and warm cider. I love opening presents. That's what Christmas is all about! Wait. I think I left something out – a big something. Can you help me figure it out? I mean, what are we even celebrating?

Of course! Jesus!

John was a cousin of Jesus, and spent his entire life telling people about Jesus and to get ready for his arrival. He was a strange fella. John ate locusts and honey, recited scriptures, and wore a ragged animal skin. And instead of Christmas cookies or fancy packages, John offered the gift of preparing for Jesus. John helped them prepare for Jesus in their heart.

RESPOND: Use art supplies, stickers, drawings, etc. to create a large sign letting others know that Jesus is coming. Hang it in your window or put it in your yard.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ROGER HUTCHISON



Roger Hutchison is the Director of Christian Formation and Parish Life at Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church in Houston. An artist who paints with children and adults in a variety of contexts, he is the author of several books including *Jesus: God Among Us*, *The Painting Table*, and *The Very Best Day*. Roger serves as the chair of the Forma Council and is a member of the National Association of Grieving Children and the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. He lives with his family outside of Houston, Texas.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Mark 1:1-8

REFLECT: Isaiah says, *“A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”* (Isaiah 40:3, NRSV) Isaiah is alerting the people of Israel to get to work. It’s time to prepare for something big to happen. In today’s Gospel the time has come, and things are happening! A man named John is out there in the wilderness, and he is crying loudly for everyone to get ready.

John may not have been the kind of prophet people were expecting. He was not a great high priest in fancy robes who studied the ancient texts. John was wild and different. He wore funny clothes and ate strange food. He brought people down to the river to wash them clean of their sins. But the people listened.

RESPOND: Have you ever talked with someone who was very different from you - maybe someone who was from a different country or religion or someone with a disability? Meeting people who are different can open our eyes to new points of view. Draw a picture of John the Baptist. What do you think he looked like? Draw a picture of someone you have met who you think is different from you. Over the next few weeks think about what you can learn from others. Talk with your family about your thoughts.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LISA PUCCIO



Lisa is the Coordinator for Special Needs Worship and Family Formation at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas. Lisa leads Rhythms of Grace Houston, a weekly worship service for special needs families, and oversees ministries for children and parents at St. Andrew’s. She has worked in parish ministry since 2002, served two terms as vice president of Forma, and is a member of the diocesan formation advisory committee in the Diocese of Texas. Lisa and her husband Mike have four grown children.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Mark 1:1-8

REFLECT: Even though you may already have an understanding of Jesus' life, the Gospel of Mark starts off by telling us that this is the beginning of good news. Isaiah prophesied a person would prepare the world for Jesus' arrival before Jesus began his mission to the world. We get this image of John the Baptist as a wild looking man preaching something revolutionary: repentance for those who sought the forgiveness of sins through baptism. Even though his message would have created a following, John the Baptist still reminded others that he was simply the messenger preparing people of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Last week, we talked about waiting for Christ's arrival, but this week, John the Baptist asks us to do more. We should feel encouraged to prepare the way of Jesus into this world and into our hearts. When we are baptized, we are baptized through water as an outward symbol of new life through the Holy Spirit. How are you utilizing this new life? Is it to prepare for Jesus in your life and in others?

RESPOND: Reflect over your baptism. For those who remember theirs, what changed in you on that day? For those who do not remember, ask your family or godparents what that day meant for you. Afterwards, look at pages 299 to 308 in the *Book of Common Prayer*. How does your baptism reflect the two major messages in Mark 1:1-8 of preparation for Jesus' coming and repentance for the forgiveness of sins? What does new life through Christ mean to you?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: WALLACE BENTON



Wallace Benton serves as the Assistant to the Rector for Youth Ministries at St. David's Episcopal Church in Roswell, GA. He's been fortunate to have grown up in the Episcopal Church and became interested in youth ministry after volunteering with his former youth program after college. Wallace has worked diocesan retreats and activities such as New Beginnings and Happening. Currently, he is the lay director for New Beginnings in the Diocese of Atlanta. He is also a member of the Episcopal Youth Ministry in ATL podcast (which you should check out immediately!)

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Mark 1:1-8

REFLECT: What kind of image comes to your mind when you think of a messenger of God? The angel Gabriel? Magi from the Orient? In the last months you have probably found yourself staring at a screen on a Sunday morning, attending an online service, where you see a Deacon or a Priest in vestments reading or preaching the message of God, wearing white and green vestments, or white and purple in the last two weeks. The Gospel of the Second Sunday of Advent describes John the Baptist as messenger of unexpected appearance: “clothed with Camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, who ate locust and wild honey.” (Mark 1:6, NRSV) I do not know about you, but I cannot help myself thinking of a “smelly-rebellious-hippie-vegan” when I read this passage. And what is wrong with that? Certainly, nothing is wrong with that image. But I use it to remind myself that the message of God can come from the most unexpected of sources. Who is the most unexpected person you would think of to be a messenger from God? Perhaps people we may encounter on our walk to the library, or on our way to work, or on our way to the kitchen; who may look, smell, and eat the same as you and me.

RESPOND: Where do you see God at work in your neighborhood? I invite you to take a walk around your neighborhood. Open your heart and your eyes, perhaps there is a sign, a garden, a person that catches your attention. As you continue walking, ask yourself, why did it catch your attention? How may the Spirit of God be at work already in that which you are observing?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: YURI RODRIGUEZ



Yuri Rodriguez is a seminarian at Sewanee, the University of the South. She is from the Diocese of Indianapolis. Yuri is also an artist, singer, and educator who specializes in Latin American Music and Culture.

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