

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2020
"HAVE A LITTLE FAITH PART 6"
By Rev. Joanna Dietz

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

*"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;*

the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

*'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"*

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." ~ Mark 1:1-8 (NRSV)

John and Jesus were cousins. We are told that Mary, while pregnant with Jesus, traveled to Elizabeth, her cousin and the mother of John, to be together in their unique pregnancies. Elizabeth says that John leapt inside her womb on hearing the voice of Mary. One would imagine that Jesus and John knew each other growing up, but the scriptures tell us nothing of that relationship beyond the pregnancies and this moment of baptism.

I get that drifting in the adult years. I was very close to my siblings as a child, but when I became an adult, there seemed to be this space between us – a gap that none of us wanted, but no one seemed able to cross. I love seeing my brother and we always enjoy the time together, but it seems so hard to make that time occur.

I wonder what this meeting of these cousins might have been like. John has been wandering in the desert, and then entered back into civilization, looking a little wild and a probably a bit scary. Jesus has been fairly silent up to this point. Do they look at each other and wonder how the other got where they were? Do they recognize the power of God in one another and rejoice in the ways they have the potential of moving the world? Again, scripture tells us very little about their personal feelings in this reunion.

But it tells me something about relationships. They matter. We may wander away from one another. And the truth is that great pain can develop between ourselves and our family members. There's that saying: "You can't choose your family but you can choose your friends." In this season of Advent, of preparation, are there relationships of either family or friends that might be important for you to rekindle? Or is there a person that you may not be able to reconcile with, but you need to work on forgiveness in your own spirit?

Prayer: God of relationships, may we look for healthy ways to renew the bonds that make us better. Open us to see those we value and to treat them in ways that honor that bond. Amen.

Thought for the Day: What relationships have you neglected that need to be renewed?