

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2020
"HAVE A LITTLE FAITH PART 7"**

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)

This scripture takes us full circle this week. You will notice similarities between this passage and the Isaiah passage. The wilderness was a place where prophets went to meet God. They came out different than when they went in. Some of those prophets include Moses, Elijah, and David. Jesus also takes a turn in the wilderness immediately after his own baptism.

But the difference is what happens after. John is calling people to repent and then baptizing them. These two go hand in hand: repent of your sins and then be washed clean. Enter Jesus, who is the most clean of the lot, asking to be baptized!

Jesus is calling us to be prepared. We must be looking ahead to the birth, yes, but further still to the season of Lent (the weeks leading up to Easter). Exile is hard. We come out of it changed, seeing the world in different ways. We have a choice in how we are changed – do we become embittered with the world, grasping at all we can to elevate and protect ourselves? Or do we seek to care for the community as a whole, loving our neighbors by asking the tough questions, including what we may be doing to increase their suffering by our own actions? Are we truly prepared for Jesus' coming?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you call us to repentance as we come from the wilderness. In our repentance we can be made clean and ready to receive your incredible grace. Open our hearts to see the community's needs before our own, so all may have a place in your Kingdom. Amen.

Thought for the Day: Where do we need to prepare space in our lives to put others before ourselves?