Advent II
Cycle A, 12.8.19
Isaiah 11: 1-10; Romans 15: 4-9
Matthew 3: 1-12
THE KINGDOM OF GOD...
CAN A DREAM BECOME A REALITY?

“What’s your superpower?” people surprisingly ask one another today or even proudly volunteer to inform about their own. It seems ironic, this current desire to proclaim a superpower, when we are not, perhaps, really always grateful for the “normal” powers most of us have of being able to see, hear, touch, taste and smell. We may not appreciate them until we lose them just as we may not really appreciate our powers of reason, our ability to choose, to remember and to forgive, our freedom, or the ability to speak or walk or imagine or our ability to engage or to withdraw. We can powerfully be a part of something greater than ourselves or remain isolated individuals or distinct little cliques.

The comic book hero Superman has multiple superpowers: speed, X-ray vision, heat vision, hearing, strength, etc. But perhaps his greatest superpower was his vulnerability! Not his vulnerability to various forms of Kryptonite, but his vulnerability to caring about someone in danger or someone hurting or someone in need, because that is what made him at once both truly human and god-like. Vulnerability was Jesus’ superpower. As God, he was omniscient, omnipotent, and Omni-everything to which we could add the prefix. He was unique because both as God and as a human being he was vulnerable. He cared. He came not in power and glory but in weakness and humility to be one of us and be one with us. That’s the person we honor and remember. That’s the person who is our hero, our Saint, whose coming among us we remember and whose return we await!

In our first reading the prophet Isaiah has a dream. Atheists, some scientists and pessimists would say it is either terribly naïve or a delusion. They would say it is impossible for the carnivores or even omnivores listed to go against their basic nature as predators and live together peacefully as herbivores. Of course, for vegetarians this begins to describe paradise. But what if the animals listed are only an allegory or metaphor? Could we imagine or dream a world where the reformed bully shall be a welcome guest of those who had been frightened and intimidated, and the Arab shall lie down comfortably beside the Israeli; where the Catholic and the Protestant shall browse through Scriptures together, with the faith of a little child to guide them? A world where the soldier and the pacifist shall be neighbors and together their young shall play and rest; where the donkey shall congenially eat hay with the elephant and govern together? A place where the minority baby shall play by the
Klan’s den and the immigrant child be welcome to play in the local’s lair? A place where there shall be no harm or ruin; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water fills the sea? Is this a dream or a delusion? The scripture today dares us to dream the Kingdom of God into reality no matter how much the world may continue to scoff at the idea as delusional.

Only God will bring about the coming of the Kingdom and only with the grace of the Holy Spirit are we able to cooperate in making God’s Kingdom more present and visible and tangible.

We need the Spirit’s gifts of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and strength, of knowledge and fear of the Lord so we do not rashly judge by appearance or hearsay but rather diligently and gently prepare the way of the Lord together. We need that superpower of caring and compassion and mercy. No one of us alone could possibly level the mountains or fill in the valleys, but we can all do our part on our little portion in our own neighborhood or family.

In the gospel John the Baptist is certainly hostile towards the Pharisees and Sadducees, calling them a brood of vipers, because they seemed to be just going through the motions and not really engaged heart and soul in John’s message. They were curious about what John had to say but were not really interested in being converted and so did not really repent and so John’s baptism could not bear fruit or produce any results in their lives. Just as John warned them against presuming special status as children of Abraham, likewise we should not presume to boast that, because we are children of God by virtue of our baptism, we are saved.

At our baptism we indeed were saved but without constant vigilance and repentance of our sins we can easily become in danger of being lost again. We, too, may just be going through the motions.

Jesus, the one greater who came after John the Baptist had a greater vision and dream. Jesus came to show all people the way to heaven. Jesus came to make it possible for all people to find and receive salvation. Jesus’ crucifixion seemed to prove his life was a delusion but his resurrection proved the truth of his vision. With God’s grace may we find our hope in Jesus and share his superpower. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant us the grace to live in harmony with one another so we may with one heart and voice glorify God and welcome one another as we are welcomed by God. And may our dreams and hope never die but perennially sprout anew being deeply rooted in the promises of Christ, our brother, our hero and our savior. May God be blessed.

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