



Breaking Open the Word

- 2022 -

December 12, 2021

Third Sunday of Advent

Lectionary: 92

Gospel Lk 3:10-18

The crowds asked John the Baptist, “What should we do?” He said to them in reply, “Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise.” Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, “Teacher, what should we do?” He answered them, “Stop collecting more than what is prescribed.” Soldiers also asked him, “And what is it that we should do?” He told them, “Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages.” Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, “I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

Spiritual Reflection:

In today’s Gospel many types of people surround John the Baptist—simple workers, tax collectors, and even soldiers. John’s message of repentance moves them interiorly and draws them all together, but each group needs special coaching on how to follow the Lord. So, they ask John, “What should we do?”

A coach can size up, look at how we’re playing the game and assess our strengths and our weaknesses. No matter what the skill, art, or game, a coach can help us reach an excellence we could never achieve on our own. John the Baptist, a good coach, takes the individuals in that crowd where they are, and challenges them to grow.

Although John could point out the areas where they needed conversion, he cannot give them the strength to actually change their lives. Yet that is what the people want.

Hearing the call to conversion is a beautiful and painful experience. Beauty comes through the grace God fills us with which calls us to let go of sin and darkness and to live more fully. Pain comes through our weakness and inability to change. But God meets us here in a profound way. He gives us the inner strength to make these changes.

Spiritual Questions:

1. Who surrounds you?
2. Do you see Christ in the people around you?
3. What is God calling you to do this Advent season.
4. What profound ways did God meet you?
5. What would John the Baptist tell you to stop doing?