

ADVENT 3

“Should We Look for Another?”

Text: St. Matthew 11:2

“Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”

This third Sunday of Advent I bring you greeting from Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who’s birth we wait for in anticipation, AMEN

“Are you the one who is to come or are we to expect someone else?” What a question from such a man. Jesus tells of us John “I tell you the truth, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist (Matt 11:11). Yet here he is, in prison, awaiting execution, and wondering-is this Jesus who he says he is?

John is answered by Our Lord-“Go back and report all you hear and see. The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the good news is preached to the poor.” What more proof do you need John? You were there, you saw it, you experienced it, you knew when he came to be baptized. You saw the spirit of God descend on Him as a dove (John 1:32) You proclaimed it! “Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world! (John1:29) How can you doubt?

John, the message from God who prepares the way for He that is to come is not alone. Look at Peter. He asks the disciples “Who do people say the son of man is? (Matt 16:16). Simon Peter in one of the first clear statements of faith, in what some have come to call one of our first creeds proclaims “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!” When Jesus tells them they will fall away on that last night in the garden, Peter tells him “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.” (Matt26:31). Really Peter? Jesus tells him “this very night before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” As they held Jesus, Peter was in fear for his own life. He turned away from our Lord and three times denied him. And the rest scattered so they would not be taken as well. They did not want to be tortured or put to death so they hid in fear.

These men were with Him during His ministry. They saw the miracles, heard His words, saw Him raise Lazarus from the dead, heal the sick, cure the lame, cast out demons. They believed He was the son of God. When He asked them if they wanted to leave because of the cost of being one of His disciples they said “Lord to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life!” (John 6:68).

The Pharisees did not believe in Him, Many people who saw him perform miracles did not believe in him. Some called Him a demon, they said he was possessed. But His own disciples? Were they not His chosen? His beloved?

They hid in the crowd as they took Jesus to the cross. They locked themselves away as He died on the cross. And when the news reached them that He had broken the chains of death, they wanted proof. If those closest to Him failed Him, what about us?

It is often the case in our own lives as we experience those adversities which sometimes seem to overwhelm us. Pain, suffering, emotional emptiness, loneliness, sickness, dying and death. It is so often in those desperate situations that we find ourselves turning to God, surrendering ourselves and pleading for an answer, and wondering. We cry to Him-where are you God when I need you most? Are you the one who is to come or are we to expect another?

John the Baptist, the disciples, each of us-when we face the harshness of the world around us, when we face our own mortality, when we face our own death-how easy it is to fall away.

The relativity of our life often does not allow us to understand the majesty of our God. We know our lives, our flesh and blood, those who are closest to us and those who are against us. We often judge reality by what we can see, touch, smell, taste and hear. We often miss the miracles-the wonder of the resurrection which took faint-hearted men and women and turned them into martyrs for Christ. A faith that has been embraced by 2 billion people all over the earth and growing. The beauty of all that surrounds us in the simplicity of a flower, the miracle of birth or the wonder of the universe. How is it in all of this, we can still doubt or allow our faith to be shaken?

Our Lord in the last night before they took Him to the cross, knelt and prayed in the garden. He looked to our Father, asked if the cup he was to drink from might pass from Him, His sweat were like drops of blood. Yet in His facing what was to come, "not my will, but thy will be done."

What suffering could we ever know was like His? He shows us in His dying the example of not just faith, but total trust. For in our faith, it is not that we should just believe, but that we surrender ourselves to Him in all we are and in all that we face. That we above all, trust Him.

We are just human. We will face trials and tribulations and will grow faint hearted. We will suffer and feel pain for those who are closest to us as they suffer. We will face loss and we will all face death. But in that, no matter how painful, how terrible, how alone we feel, never let go of Him whose love for us, and understanding of our failings, goes beyond anything we can imagine.

In the recent death of a close friend, I spoke with her children about never letting go of God. I gave them each crosses to wear and told them that whenever they felt lost, or alone, or struggled to find a reason for the loss of their mother, that they should grab hold of that cross with both hands and not let go. That in all things, they should always trust God.

Sometimes we need reassurance. John the Baptist did, Peter did, the disciples did. They failed in their faith and sometimes so will we. But our loving God understands and He always opens His heart to us as He did to them. He will be there for us even when we do not think it can get any worse and we ask if he is the one.

In trusting Christ, we must abandon our wants and desires and surrender fully to Him. We must place our lives in His hands and no matter what happens, know that He holds us in His loving hands and we will not fall. The time to do that is now, here, in this moment, in this place-to say to God-I am here and I put all my trust in you. My life is not my own but yours. Let the promise of your kingdom shine in me no matter what I will face in my life, no matter how we suffer or those we love suffer, for if we trust in Him then we know the answer-yes Lord, you are the one who we know has come.

“Blessed is He, whosoever shall not be offended in me.” Let us proclaim in our hearts, in our souls, in our deeds, in our words, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God.” When the weight of the world is upon us, when we fear the outcome, when we are shaken and when we cry for mercy-hold onto Him for He will never abandon us. For all of this, and all of us shall pass away, but we are His and we shall be with Him in paradise. Walk with Him for He never turns from us. And when we cannot go on, know that He will carry us.

In all that we know, in all that we see, in all that we feel-know that the only thing we can count on is God-for He has always been, is now and will be forever. In this season of anticipation in the Advent of our Lord, let us proclaim with our hearts and voices-Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. AMEN