

Second Sunday of Advent – C
Fr. Chad S. Green
Holy Family Catholic Church
Kirkland, Washington
9 December 2018

Baruch 5:1-9
Psalm 126
Philippians 3:4-6, 8-11
(Luke 3:4, 6) Luke 3:1-6

Prepare the Way of the Lord

There are a few times in the Gospels when the Evangelist adds historical information – such as, names of people or places – to the narrative of Jesus’ life and ministry here on Earth.¹ These verses don’t always fit in so smoothly with the rest of the Gospel narrative. And because these people and places are often unfamiliar to us, it can be easy to sort of blow by these names without paying them too much attention. Or without understanding how – or even *if* – the names of these people and places are particularly important to *our* faith in Jesus Christ.

Today’s Gospel from Luke begins in just this way, with a list of names of historical people: Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate, Herod, Philip, Lysanias, Annas, and Caiaphas. As well as names of historical places: Judea, Galilee, Ituraea, Tachonitis, and Abilene. Some of these people and places are familiar to us. Others, not as much. Whether or not we recognize them, we can assume that the names of these people and places were *meaningful* to the people of Jesus’ time. But we might wonder, *are the names of these people and places still meaningful for us today?* How do the names of these people and places help us grow in our faith in Jesus Christ *today?*

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Well, whether we can remember *exactly* who these people were or *exactly* where these places were, we *can* still appreciate what Luke is trying to do for our faith by listing them for us. That is, Luke wants to convey to us the *immensity* of what happened when Jesus Christ entered

into our world around 2,000 years ago. How the balance of *power* was shifted for the rest of *eternity*. And how the whole *course* of human history was changed *forever*.²

We can never cease to grow more and more in our appreciation of and gratitude for what God did for us by sending His Son into our world, to redeem us and save us from sin and death. His Death on the Cross; His Resurrection from the dead; and His Ascension into Heaven changed the balance of *power* in the world and changed the *course* of history for all of us. No longer does sin and death have *power* over us.³ All of us have been reconciled to God and have been put back on *course*, on the Way to Heaven.⁴

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One of the ways in which Luke marks the significance and immensity of Jesus Christ coming into our world is by doing some “name-dropping”, so to speak. In just two verses he lists no less than the Roman Emperor and his Governor; the three Jewish kings of Palestine; and the Jewish high priests.⁵ These six names encapsulate all the political, economic, and religious power of the known world at that time.

And, just as we are duly impressed by this collection of worldly power – by this “name-dropping” of the most famous and significant people of the known world at that time – it is then that Luke is ready to introduce the world – introduce *us* – to a couple of guys whom no one would ever expect to become famous.

The first, a guy with no title to distinguish him. A guy from nowhere in particular but a name-less desert. A guy with no visible worldly power or authority.⁶ A guy named John who cries out to us:⁷ Stop paying so much attention to these other guys who *seem* to have all the power and all the fame. Start preparing for Someone *else* to come. Someone you might not be

expecting. Someone who is going to be more important to you and to all people everywhere than any emperor, governor, king, or high priest. Prepare the way for *that* One to come!

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This is what the Season of Advent is for. This is what Advent helps us do. To stop paying so much attention to the things that *aren't really that important*. To start making *more room* in our days, in our lives, in our minds, and in our hearts for Someone who is so much more important than anyone else, anyplace else, or anything else we could imagine. No matter where we're at in our faith journey, each of us can *always* make more room in our lives and prepare the way in our hearts for Jesus Christ.

Perhaps today, on this Second Sunday of Advent, we could follow the example of Luke. Make a list of the things that are important to us. I don't mean the things that *should* be important to us. Rather, the things that take up a lot of our time, thoughts, attention, and energy. Perhaps that includes political figures, celebrities, sports, entertainment, money, shopping, power. They could be important people, places, and things that deserve *some* of our attention. But are they the *most* important? Do they get *too* much of our attention?

Advent is a time to stop and quiet ourselves a little bit. For just four short weeks we have the opportunity to reassess what's *important*. "To discern what is of value."⁸ To make Jesus Christ more important than ever before. Then, to let Him guide us in deciding who else, where else, and what else should be most important people, places, and things in our lives.

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Let us please welcome Erin Maguire from Catholic Community Service to speak to us about some very important people, places, and ministries that we as a parish family have been and can continue to be supporting here in our community.

¹ For example, see: Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 1:5, 2:1-2, 3:23-38

² See William Barclay *Daily Study Bible* "The Courier of the King" (Luke 3:1-6): "To Luke the emergence of John the Baptist was one of the hinges on which history turned. So much so is that the case that he dates it in no fewer than six different ways."

³ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 549:

"By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness and death, Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below, but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of human bondage."

and CCC 1990:

"Justification detaches man from sin which contradicts the love of God, and purifies his heart of sin. Justification follows upon God's merciful initiative of offering forgiveness. It reconciles man with God. It frees from the enslavement to sin, and it heals."

Also see CCC 1995

⁴ See CCC 457:

"The Word became flesh for us in order to save us by reconciling us with God, who 'loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins': 'the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world', and 'he was revealed to take away sins'"

and CCC 603:

"God 'did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all', so that we might be 'reconciled to God by the death of his Son'"

and CCC 613-614:

"Christ's death is both the Paschal sacrifice that accomplishes the definitive redemption of men, through 'the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world', and the sacrifice of the New Covenant, which restores man to communion with God by reconciling him to God through the 'blood of the covenant, which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'. This sacrifice of Christ is unique; it completes and surpasses all other sacrifices. First, it is a gift from God the Father himself, for the Father handed his Son over to sinners in order to reconcile us with himself. At the same time it is the offering of the Son of God made man, who in freedom and love offered his life to his Father through the Holy Spirit in reparation for our disobedience."

Also see CCC 1436, 1442, 1449

See John 14:6: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

⁵ Luke 3:1-2

⁶ Luke 3:2

⁷ Luke 3:3-6

⁸ Philippians 1:10