

Readings

Is 11:1-10

Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17

Rom 15:4-9

Mt 3:1-12

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Students have become more comfortable speaking about a personal relationship with Jesus. They might say something like, “when I gave my life to Jesus,” to speak about a change or a conversion. They recognize that Christ has in some way arrived, or come, into their life, that the advent of Christ has happened to them.

We begin this second week of Advent turning to what the Lord wants to do in our lives and world, that is, to come into them so that we can give our hearts and lives to him.

John the Baptist calls us to make the preparations necessary for this to happen. He doesn't merely point to the nativity of Christ. Rather, he points to the whole event of Christ coming into our lives so that knowledge of the Lord will fill us, as water covers the sea, and peace and justice will stretch forth in every part of our being.

John the Baptist uses strong language to call our attention to Christ's coming: cut down every tree that does not bear good fruit. Perhaps we can ask ourselves, is there something that is keeping us from loving God and one another, something that is keeping us from giving our life to the Lord?

A student in my class, during a conversation about the challenge of giving up things that we may be addicted to, said that if someone told him that the phone was keeping him from living fully, he would give it up. Another said the same about drinking. For others, it may be something else that

prevents us from a life devoted to God and others. It may be judgment or resentment or materialism or self-centeredness.

Advent begins here, and then extends outward. The Lord who comes into our lives also comes into the world. For he wants to bring forth peace and justice, where the poor are heard, where no one comes to harm, where the things that need to be cut down are done so. What would it look like for us to be part of this vision of Christ's advent in the world, where the wolf and the lamb lay together, where the little child guides rather than the powerful, and where the poor and vulnerable are heard rather than being told they have no place.

The Lord comes into our lives to make this happen. He wants to burn the chaff of things that separate and cause destruction to others so that the kernel of wheat can bring forth new life within us and around us.

Ultimately, God is bringing forth a new kingdom. He does not allow the forces of destruction to endure. He judges the poor with justice and strikes the ruthless. On his mountain, there will be no harm or ruin; justice will flourish in his time and fullness of peace will be forever.

The event of Christ coming into our lives will change us, and we will be filled with him, as water covers the sea. And everything about us will then lead toward the work of God in the world to establish peace forever, where no one comes to any harm, and all will sing praises to God's name.