

Second Sunday of Advent

December 9, 2007

Isaiah 11:1-10; Ps. 72; Romans 15:4-9; Matthew 3:1-12

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Today, on this second Sunday in Advent we stand with Isaiah, Paul and John the Baptist as they open up God's word for us. The repentance that they preach is a call to conversion—and may perhaps be a call to radical changes in our lives. The vision of Isaiah is a beautiful and vivid description of the peace that will arise when the poor are treated with justice and all nations on the earth will be living in peace, no longer suffering harm from one another. The images used by the prophet—wolf and lamb, leopard and kid, calf and lion, child and cobra—are striking figures of natural differences that can and must one day be reconciled before the Kingdom of God can at last become a reality. And there *are* such great contrasts in our world today!

We hear David in Psalm 72 singing of the King's son who rules his people with justice, bringing profound peace by his actions in behalf of the poor and afflicted and thus blessing all the tribes of the earth. What a picture of international cooperation and collaboration this psalm brings to mind!

And Paul writing to the Romans points to Christ as the source of the strength that all of us, today's Gentiles, will need to join our brothers and sisters from whatever cultures and lands in praising God the Father of us all in the diverse manners we have acquired throughout our histories. Today we learn from our news media about so many striking differences in the beliefs, living conditions, customs and traditions, and experiences of our brothers and sisters who inhabit this planet earth that it will take deep faith in Christ to assure us that such reconciliation is possible and, please God, probable.

But the person most claiming our attention today, however, is John the Baptist, who is challenging our lives of comfort and self satisfaction—even our inclination to ignore the call to learn of the sufferings endured in so many places. John is telling us that it is time now to examine our lives for the quality of our actions and the sincerity of our intentions. Are we willing to change our ways in response to the invitations to prayer and action for peace and justice that come to our attention? The spirit of John is still alive today in these invitations.

We live in a nation where citizens have power to influence government leaders. We are blessed with the bounties of field and stream and live in comparative peace. In this 21st century we are also enriched by a long tradition of believers and martyrs and are aware, as never before in history, of the conditions and desperate needs of so many of our fellow human beings, far and near. This Advent season we have the opportunity to make known the Kingdom of God and show by our lives its beauty and worth. Are we willing to respond to John's challenge?

May the Lord Jesus for whose coming we are preparing give us the grace to hear and take appropriate actions!