

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

3rd Sunday of Advent | For Sunday, December 13, 2020

In Need of a Savior

Written by Angie Windnagle

Isaiah 61:1-2A, 10-11

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28



During dinner time this week, one of my kids started playing with his food, most likely to get a laugh out of the family, creating a mess where most of it became inedible. This led to a discussion on how playing with our food like this shows the value we put in it. We talked about the disparity of food stability throughout the world for many populations, and how treating our food as a gift from God helps bring dignity to those who don't have as much since it allows us to use less and give more. It was a beautiful learning moment as they started to understand that just because something doesn't feel as valuable to them, doesn't mean it isn't valuable.

In the first reading, we see this same theme of finding value in something depending on the orientation of our hearts. The prophet speaks of the Messiah who is to come that will relieve oppression, free those in prison, and heal those with broken hearts. This seems like a beautiful promise of hope and redemption. But something that strikes me is that those things are highly valuable only to those who have experienced being captive, understood the experience of brokenness, or felt the grips of poverty. The promise of someone who will heal only makes sense to someone who needs healing. Hearing that a doctor is coming to my house only stirs my heart if I am in need of a physician.

Since Christ came to redeem all of humanity, this reading can serve as a sort of examination of spirit for us. If he has come for the broken, the poor, the oppressed, the captive, the ones in need of vindication, do we really see with clarity our deep need

for a Savior? Are we utterly convinced of our own poverty of spirit, imprisonment by sin and desires of this world, and brokenness of heart? As we journey through Advent, we can ask ourselves if we are treating the gift of Christ's coming like my son treated our food — something that is good to have around, but easy to take advantage of and become forgetful of its life giving and necessary value. If our time in Advent makes us feel indifferent, it isn't Advent or the Church that is the problem, it is that we have forgotten we are broken, imprisoned, and in need of being freed by the Savior.

In the Gospel, this becomes even more striking when St. John the Baptist announces that he is preparing the way for the Messiah by quoting from Isaiah 40:3, "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, make straight the way of the Lord." He points to the verse in Isaiah that brought the Israelites so much hope, the promise of comfort and an answer to all their suffering. Those who have been waiting for this promise in anticipation and hope would have heard this and immediately made the connection. But in order to recognize this beacon of hope, they had to be immersed in the writings of the prophets in Scripture and living in recognition of their own need for the Messiah. If the words of Scripture this weekend don't seem relevant to us or stir us, it may be a call to immerse ourselves in Scripture and the story of salvation, recognizing deeply our need for redemption. The emptiness we feel because of what is happening in the world today has an answer. The anger that imprisons us because of how unfairly we have been treated this year has an answer. The poverty we experience because of lost jobs, lost relationships, and lost plans has an answer. The answer is found in the Christ child we will celebrate at Christmas.

Christ's coming at the first Christmas was for all of humanity for all of time, which means he has truly come for you and for me and all of the moments in our lives that need healing and redemption. Let us make sure we know the voice of God, by reading Scripture and by spending time in prayer with Him. This way when he comes again, whether it is in quiet personal prayer this Christmas, or at the Second Coming, we can be ready and say, "this is the answer to all of my sufferings, this is the one who will free me." Come, Lord Jesus.

Angie Windnagle

PRAYER

Hope, O my soul, hope.
You know neither the day nor the hour.
Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly,
even though your impatience makes doubtful
what is certain,
and turns a very short time into a long one.
Dream that the more you struggle,
the more you prove the love
that you bear your God,
and the more you will rejoice one day
with your Beloved,
in a happiness and rapture that can never end.

-St. Teresa of Avila