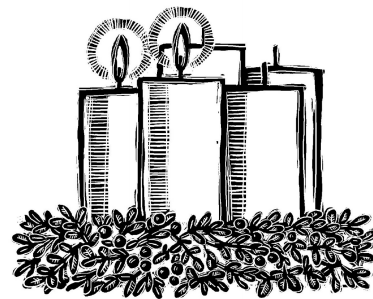


Advent Road Work

Second Sunday
in Advent

Two Seasons

- Two seasons: winter & road constr. Joke: plows away, orange barrels. All have been frustrated: lane closures, detours, orange cones, bottlenecked highways. I-94 always: inconvenienced commuters, slowing drivers. But even though annoys, we get used; just joke about annual season of road constr.
- As Christians, new season, Advent. Last Sunday: first, new church year. Talked about blue (hope); we prep for Jesus' coming: 1st & 2nd. Every year at Advent, journey to Judean wilderness to listen to preaching of JB. Advent preacher of NT: preps hearts for Jesus' coming; today, by talking road constr project. Not work on I-94, but constr on road by which Christ comes, enters hearts this Advent. So listen to voice in wilderness, because today JB preps hearts by preaching about ARW.



John – the Advent Preacher

- **Vs. 2b.** Not by accident. Long before birth, God chose John, son of Zech (story), to be Adv preacher, forerunner of Christ, to prep us for Christ's coming. **Vs. 4ab.** 700 yrs! 1st lesson: **"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me" (Mal 3:1).** 400 yrs! So long before birth, God selected John to get hearts ready for Jesus with road constr project, ARW.
- Project sounds like: **vs. 4c-5.** To prep us for 1st & 2nd coming, JB has to build highway – smooth, level, straight highway that leads into our hearts, on which Christ will travel. Build good road!
- Purpose for any road constr project – build good road. When WIDOT starts road constr project: when fill potholes, seal cracks, paint lines, widen lanes, smooth concrete, repave road – goal, make travelling easier on better road. Really JB's goal: God sent John to build good road, to make sure the road coming into our hearts cleared off, smooth, level, straight, easy to travel, ready for Christ. Why John is **vs. 4bc.**

Our Heart's Terrain

- Problem with John's ARW (honest: all road constr projects run into problems, setbacks) is terrain of our hearts. All kinds of obstacles, roadblocks to be cleared away first. Hearts filled with valleys, mountains, hills, crooked roads, rough ways to be straightened, smoothed before Christ can come. That's terrain of heart; what landscape is like; can't build straight highway over that!
- If ever driven through Rockies or Appalachians, you know what I mean; how crooked, hilly those roads are. US 129, from TN into NC, in Great Smoky Mnts; 11 miles, "Tail of the Dragon;" 318 sharp curves or switchbacks! Forever to drive 11 miles; holding wheel tightly! Very dangerous – Harleys & Corvettes love it! Scenic, but with all those curves, switchbacks, hills, hard to travel!
- In same way, our hearts are hard to travel! Terrain of hearts is by nature not kind of landscape you can build smooth, straight highway for Christ to travel on. We're have switchbacks; switch back and forth between godly life and committing sins we know God hates. We've got boulders, logs blocking road: pet sins (personally struggle with); we know are wrong but can't bring ourselves to stop. Even as I mention, you know! Willful sin. When you've decided to sleep with, live with non-spouse, you know that's wrong; look at dirty pictures on computer, know wrong; let mouth speak filthy language, know wrong. Conscience tells you! Until you stop, boulders, fallen trees blocking road. Finally, sometimes feels like road is crumbling apart; weighed down, worn out, on verge of crumbling apart: with sadness (2 funerals in month; Dec sad month), sickness (lots hospitalized), stress (work, finances, relationships). Take a look at our roads: cracked, crooked, crumbling. What terrain of heart is like; sin and effects have taken toll on our roads. We need Christ to come into hearts, lives. But we have lot of ARW that needs to be done first!

Baptism of Repentance for the Forgiveness of Sins

- That's why God sent JB – to get major ARW done in our hearts. **Vs. 3.** John preached and baptized to forgive sins. You were baptized! At baptism, God HS put on hardhat, fired up bulldozer, changed terrain of heart. Filled in valleys, took down mountains, smoothed landscape. Strange way to talk baptism. But when you think how baptism completely changes us: creates/strengthens faith in Jesus, washes away all sins, adopts us into family God, serves as daily reminder of God's grace in our lives; realize: in baptism, God was doing serious ARW in heart. Clearing the way, building toll-free expressway between you and heaven on which Christ would come into heart, dwell there by faith.
- What ARW is all about; why John preached **vs. 3b.** Now, as baptized believers, landscape is different. Now we repent of sins we commit: sorry, turn away, try not to commit, keep road clear, for Jesus! He's coming! He came once: baby, life, die, rise to save us. He still comes, through W&S. And will come again, on Last Day, end of world. When you put faith in Christ, when you believe in Jesus as Savior who came, comes, & will come again, then your path is straight, road ready for Jesus.

Prepare the Highway of Your Heart for Jesus

- This winter I hope road crews ready to plow away snow and ice that make winter driving dangerous. This summer I'm sure we'll see that orange signs again, "road work ahead." Our two seasons.
- But today JB preaches about ARW. Every Advent season God uses John's preaching to clear away roadblocks and build smooth, straight highway in our hearts for Jesus to come. We'll hear more from JB next Sunday. For today, prepare the highway of your heart for Jesus, and through ARW of HS, welcome Jesus when he comes.

Luke 3:1-6 (NIV 2011)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Tracoonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—²during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. ⁵Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. ⁶And all people will see God's salvation.’”