

Second Sunday in Advent
Sermon text: Luke 3:1-6
Related text: Malachi 3:1-4
Date preached: December 6, 2009
Sermon Title: Get in the way!

“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” That is the message from John the Baptizer, as he quotes the prophet Isaiah. It sounds all nice and easy. Make preparations.

In nearly every vocation there is a time of preparation that may include formal, observational or functional training. The same holds true for us in our life as children of God.

Let’s start by looking at this on a congregational level. Much of our ministry, as well as the ministry of the wider church is to prepare the way of the Lord in the life of God’s people. Frequently we start in baptism.

Holy Baptism is one of the earliest steps of preparation for a life of discipleship. With each baptism we hear the promises that parents are asked to make, which also serves as a reminder of the promises we ourselves have made. In that comes our pledge as a congregation to support the parents and the newly baptized to keep these promises.

We do this in many ways. Sunday school teachers, our catechism teachers and mentors with the materials we use not only serve to teach the core of faith and belief, but also strive to make the connections between what we believe and what that means for how we live our daily lives.

What this work does is prepares us to get in the way. We hear much in our lives about getting out of the way, thus risking something bad happening. In this case, it is the exact opposite. To get in the way is a good thing because when we get in the way we are being immersed in Jesus who the Gospel of John records as saying, “I am the way, the truth and the life.”

To be in the way of Jesus is to not only walk with him in our life, but to see the surprising places in life where he meets us.

He meets us in the face of the poor who just want something to eat without ridicule. He meets us in the face of the suffering, be it at the hospital beds, nursing homes, or in our own homes.

Perhaps not so surprising is that Jesus meets us here. He meets us not so much in a place as he meets us in any place where the Good news is shared. Jesus

meets us in times of conversation as we read together the Bible. It doesn't matter how many people are present; for he is with you in your devotional reading and in Bible studies.

Jesus meets us in worship. Here he speaks to us knocking down barriers of our sinfulness to say "I forgive you." He greets us with peace. He invites us to hear the truth; the truth he speaks sets us free and gives us life.

Jesus also has the great surprise of meeting us in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. In all our concerns regarding this sacrament, Jesus always shows up. I am honored to be one of many voices throughout the church that speaks his loving words directly to you. "This is my body, given for you. This is my blood shed for you."

To be in the Way is to be fed for our journey along the way. To be fed in the Way, that is Jesus prepares us to go out and be in the way of others.

This is a time in our lives where doing the day to day things will put us in others way. We will be in the way of other people getting in lines at the checkout counter, in traffic, and in the other busyness we experience.

Being in their way is not meant to cause them problems or add to the stress of their lives, but to offer them the good news of Jesus.

These provide us with opportunities to share with people the one who has come, whose birth we are anxiously awaiting to celebrate. Disciples of Jesus, this is our calling to prepare the way of the Lord.

Our calling is to help make the connection that what we are doing is celebrating God's gift of salvation that first came to us as a baby. Our calling is to help each other see the connection between celebrating a special season and our faith.

Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life." He had come to be in our way and guide us in his way, that we may live in truth and live this life abundantly.
AMEN.