DECEMBER/2016

From Heaven Above to Earth I Come . . .

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Grace to You and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ--

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wonderful things.--
{Psalm 72:18]

From heaven above to earth I come To bring good news to every one!
Glad tidings of great joy I bring To all the world and gladly sing:

Look, dear friends, look over there! That lies within that manager bare?
Who is that lovely little one? The baby Jesus, God's dear Son.
{Lutheran Worship Hymn 37, vv 1 and 7]

ADVENT IS A four-week period in which we prepare for the coming of the Lord. We prepare not only for his coming as a baby at Christmas. We also prepare for his coming into our lives today, and we prepare for his coming again at the end of history.

THE BIBLE TELLS us about a "trailblazer," John the Baptist, who prepared people to meet and worship JESUS. He said, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." {Matthew 3:3] He traveled around baptizing people and telling them about JESUS.

EVERY YEAR DURING Advent, we have a scripture dealing with John the Baptist. John the Baptist was a person when God chose to prepare the way for Jesus' coming. The prophet Isaiah said:

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness;
Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."
{Matthew 3:3]

MATTHEW TELLS US that John is the person about whom Isaiah was speaking.

- John came to prepare the way of the Lord.
- He came to straighten the pathways that Jesus would travel.

JOHN THE BAPTIST was a bit different, his dress was a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. {Matthew 3:4]

JOHN PREACHED A message of ***REPENTANCE.*** We tend to think of repentance as feeling bad about sin--feeling guilty. But repentance is more than feeling bad--much more. Repentance is doing something ***positive-- changing--turning around*** and **facing** in a ***NEW DIRECTION!*** The genuinely repentant person doesn't just feel bad. ***He or she also tries to begin living a POSITIVE LIFE.***

WHAT DOES THIS story about John the Baptist have to do with us?

- Perhaps it tells us to stand humbly before God--leaving behind the **pride** that would ***SEPARATE,*** **us from God.**
- Perhaps it reminds us that we too have need for ***REPENTANCE,*** and ***FORGIVENESS***--that we are **not alright** just as we are.
- Perhaps it reminds us that God calls us to change the direction of our lives--to take **seriously the** claims of **faith** on our lives.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. {Romans 15:13]

How glad we'll be to find it so! Then with the shepherds let us go
To see what God for us has done In sending us his own dear Son.
Lutheran Worship Hymn 37:6]

Amen

A Spiritual Writing Meditation
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May Loren's love and passion for God's word, shine through his words as he encourages all of us to grow in grace. Please enjoy ***The Faith Focus****; a series featuring spiritual writings from Loren.*