



Advent Reflection for Monday, December 20
Deacon John Musco

You can listen to the reading and reflection by clicking [here](#).

Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

As a deacon it is my joy to proclaim the gospel during Sunday services and a couple of Sundays ago this was the Gospel reading of the day. Gospel means “good news”. So, what is the “good news” here? One of the challenges of reading this aloud were all the ancient place names, rulers, and high priests—I definitely had to look up how to pronounce “Ituraea.” The passage also notes when this took place—“the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberias.” I remember finding this puzzling—why be so precise?

Thinking about it now, I wonder if the writer is trying to say that this really happened. This is not some story from centuries ago, this was real. One of the things I love about my faith is that I have the assurance that God is at work all the time, in the here and now of our lives. It is a grave distortion to think that our faithfulness buys us a ticket into heaven. From the Gospel I have the assurance that Jesus is telling us two seemingly contradictory things: God’s kingdom is coming; God’s kingdom is here! And I believe that; because I have the experience of God at work in me and God at work in the people I connect with. God’s kingdom is here, God’s kingdom is coming! That’s the good news.

Of course, allowing the experiencing of the kingdom to come into ourselves is not easy. We must be receptive. That’s John’s mission, telling us that we must open ourselves up to God through a “baptism of repentance.” We have to clear out some obstacles. This is so beautifully expressed in the quotation from Isaiah that we know so well from Handel’s Messiah: Isaiah is telling us: let’s clear the way, get rid of the barriers that we put up.

That's the work of Advent. That's my work and yours. I know that hearing so many voices of our congregation in these reflections helps me to prepare the way. I hope that we may truly feel the joy of Christ's arrival among us in the baby Jesus.

John Musco loves serving the people of Holy Apostles and others throughout the diocese. He shares his ministry with his husband Martin. He enjoys cooking, gardening and walking about in the world.

