

2nd Sunday of Advent

Dec. 4, 2011

TITLE- "Stirred but not Shaken"

Sometimes when we hear the same thing over and over again it becomes less and less meaningful. This is the time of year when we hear about all these different sales. JC Penney is having a ONE DAY sale! Macy's is having a 3 HOUR sale! Kohl's is having a yellow tag sale! Then we all heard about black Friday and cyber Monday sales! The Monday before Thanksgiving they started to line up at Best Buy to get big savings on electronics, that's 4 days before the sale. You almost feel as if you're an idiot if you do not participate in these deals. I don't need anything but this deal is too good to pass up on, so I better go shopping!

Then you realize that JC Penny is always having a one day sale, and the 3 hour sale at Sears will happen again, and the stuff at Kohl's that has those yellow dots, they are things you don't really need. Sales then become less and less meaningful because we become saturated with sales. Someone is always having a sale. Soon we will be bombarded with the after Christmas sales to be followed by New Year's sales, and so it goes.

Then on the Spiritual side of Christmas we have all those religious clichés, the same spiritual sappy-talk you hear every December. Talk about Love and Sharing and Caring and Charity and Singing and Hugging, a time for family in between all the sales. And then we try to get a person to come to church, after all that's what Christmas is about. We say things like, we are a friendly Church, or we have a good Pastor, or our Christmas worship services are great.

Now, meet John the Baptist, a most interesting character, he's different from all the rest. Somehow I do not think he would be interested in any 3 Hour sales event at Sears. He wore Camel's hair with a leather belt. He's the kind of guy that would have done well on the television series Survivor. Unfortunately he probably would have been the first person voted out; because of the things he would say. He didn't make use of a lot of the Christmas clichés we use today

especially around this time of year. John the Baptist didn't talk about love, didn't wish anyone a Merry Christmas, and he wasn't into hugs. You really cannot find a lot of sweet talk coming out of the mouth of John, the only sweetness you find is the honey and wild locust going into his mouth. And he didn't much care about what other people said about him or what other people thought about him.

What would John say to us today? John would get in your face and say to each and every one of us, you need to change! There is something wrong with you! You need to repent and you need to repent now, right now! And if you are like most people our response to him would be, "WHY?" "I am fine the way I am!" "What does this guy know anyway?"

In the Collect we ask God to stir up our hearts! Do we know what we are asking for? John's heart was stirred up. John wasn't happy with the Church. When you ask God to stir up your heart it's a dangerous thing. Sometimes I don't like it when my heart gets stirred up, especially when God stirs my heart. I begin to think differently, I begin to act differently! It sometimes means that I am under stress, things in my life and ministry are bothering me, something is not right. I would rather be in a calm state, a serene state, or a peaceful state. I want things in my life to stay the same. I don't like change.....and John is asking me to change!

My heart gets stirred up when I see sin in my life! When I see evil in the world! My heart gets stirred up when I see tragedy, someone misusing the name of God, or anyone turning their back to God or his Word. My heart gets stirred up when I see the things I love get threatened or when churches compromise truth or doesn't take Gods Word seriously! My heart gets riled when I am confronted by evil, by Luke warmness!

John is stirring things up, John is stirring people up, in hopes that they will change, in hopes that religious people will see their sin clearly enough to repent. There was a pastor who was confronted by a Hindu Holy man who started to berate him for talking about sin. "I do not feel this sin you are talking about", the Holy man said. The pastor turned to the Holy man and said," Do

you see that massive stone there?” “Yes”, responded the Hindu Holy Man, “Does that stone weigh a great deal?” “Of Course it does!” “If you lay that stone on top of a corpse will the corpse feel it?”, “of course not!” The pastor said,” The fact that the corpse does not feel the weight of the stone does not mean that the stone is not there.” God stirs the hearts of unbelievers so that they might see and feel the weight of their sin but he does the same with believers! As religious people it’s easy for us to look out our church window and get used to the way things are. We begin to believe that the King is never coming; that no changes are needed, that the brokenness around us has always been there and always will be so we do nothing. We stare out the church window thinking to ourselves that John’s message of repentance is for someone else. I’m good! I love God and follow his commands the best I *know how and* we lose focus! We forget that there is much crookedness in our lives, in our homes, in our churches, and in our society. The way of the King seems far off. We struggle to get our own kids to come to church and we grieve at the number of young families that leave the church. The Northwest District LCMS reports that 93% of those youth Confirmed in the church this year will leave the Church. Our Church seems listless and without direction. We are tolerant but not excited as we sit looking out our Church windows.

John’s message to me is one of repentance! I need Jesus! Jesus is Emmanuel! The problems we see in our lives, in our homes, in our Church, and in society are all on Jesus’ agenda. These are the things for which he was born for in a manger. This is why he bore our sins on a cross. Jesus opens our eyes and stirs our hearts and when that happens it can hurt. There are tears because our expectations have been raised and our eyes begin to see clearly the needs we have those around us. It is always better to see than to be blind; even if our first glimpse of self is the need for a shower and a shave. Soon we are able to see his marvelous salvation being brought to completion in our lives by God’s Spirit changing us. The call this day is not to lament in our problems but to rejoice in the solutions. Jesus has come, baptized with the Holy Spirit and now we are redeemed and we are precious children of God. Isaiah cries out to God’s penitent people, “Comfort! Comfort!” This is not Lazy-boy recliner or couch

kind of comfort; this is comfort towards a people who were ripped out of their homes, to a people who were made slaves, to a people who were living in a foreign land not of their choosing, all because of sin! And their hearts were stirred; having most of your family slaughtered by the Babylonian's will stir your heart. The comfort they are receiving is the same comfort we are receiving..... Our sins have been paid for! Our iniquity has been forgiven! Our warfare has ended and we have received 'double' from the hand of the Lord. Instead of being broken with the words, PUNISHMENT! PUNISHMENT! Instead we hear the words COMFORT! COMFORT! It is these words that stirred Gods people to change, to rebuild their lives, and to wait for a coming messiah. I pray that God will stir hearts this advent season, allowing the Holy Spirit to change us as we with all our hearts seek the coming Savior!

In Christ,

Pastor Toby Joeckel