

Gospel Lesson for the Week

December 9, 2007

2nd Sunday in Advent

Please Read:

[Matthew 3:1-12](#)

Read Also:

[Isaiah 11:1-10](#)

[Psalms 72:1-7](#)

[Romans 15:4-13](#)

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

--- Matthew 3:1-12

Spirit and Fire

John was no diplomat.
He said what was on his mind;
he told it straight.

And when the “holy people”
turned up for baptism,
he told them in no uncertain terms
just what he thought.
“You brood of viper!”
He warned them
not to rely on ancient pedigree
but, living in the now,
to exhibit repentance
by the way they lived.

Then he told them how to get there
He pointed beyond himself
to One who would come after him
bringing a different baptism:
“Holy Spirit and fire,”
cleansing and power.

The candle we light this day,
eight days into Advent,
is our reminder of the fire within
that brings its light and warmth
into our hearts
and blazes like a beacon
of welcome to all.

*Lord, let your fire penetrate to my heart
with cleansing and power.
Baptize me anew with your lifegiving Spirit,
manifest in the Babe of Bethlehem
and the Man of Galilee,
so that I may, by your grace
and through your presence,
bring light and energy and hope and healing
to someone I touch this day. AMEN.*