

## ADVENT: A TIME OF HOPEFUL EXPECTATION

**Second Sunday of Advent**

**December 9, 2007**

**Isaiah 11:1-10**

**Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19**

**Romans 15:4-13**

**Matthew 3:1-12**

### Make Room for God

This week's Gospel text introduces us to John the Baptizer, sometimes known as the last "Old Testament prophet" because of his warnings about God's coming judgment. His appearance heralds the coming of a new era in the reign of God that will be ushered in by Jesus. John stands at the threshold of this new era, appearing in the Judean desert wearing a tunic made of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist – wilderness attire that closely associates him with the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:8) who was to return before the day of judgment (Malachi 4:5). Further along in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus himself compares John to Elijah (11:10, 14), pointing to John's work in preparing people for the coming of God's kingdom.

"Someone more powerful is going to come," John says, one who "will baptize [us] with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matthew 3:11, *CEV*). This eschatological Elijah and apocalyptic prophet speaks with urgency, calling us to "do something" to indicate that we "have really given up our sins" (Matthew 3:8, *CEV*). John admonishes us to get ready for the Lord's coming and echoes the prophet Isaiah: "Get the road ready for the Lord! Make a straight path for him" (Matthew 3:3, *CEV*). Are we ready to listen to the shouts from this messenger? How are we to prepare for the Lord's coming?

John urged people to repent, or to turn back to God, and he proclaimed that "the kingdom of heaven will soon be here" (Matthew 3:2, *CEV*). The Greek word *metanoia*, rendered in English as "repentance," involves more than expressing sorrow or regret for past behaviors; it involves a true conversion of lifestyle – a change of heart and making room in our lives for God. I am reminded of the words of the refrain to a hymn by Emily Elizabeth Steele Elliot (1836-1897):

*O, come to my heart, Lord Jesus,  
There is room in my heart for Thee.*

In this season of Advent, we are once again called to make room in our hearts for the Holy One who is to come – Emmanuel – God with us – whose kingdom embraces the vision described by Isaiah where "the poor and the needy will be treated with fairness and with justice" and where "the land will be filled with people who know and honor the LORD" (11:4, 9b, *CEV*).

Jesus the Messiah is coming! “The Spirit of the LORD will be with him” (Isaiah 11:2, *CEV*). Let us heed the messenger’s voice by getting “the road ready for the Lord” so that we may joyfully respond, “Yes, Lord Jesus, there is room in my heart for Thee.”

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Barbara Bernstengel, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Director of the Education Unit in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: China Partnership** – With thanks to God for the growing demand for Bibles in China and for the Amity Press, which has printed more than 41 million Bibles for distribution in mainland China over the last 20 years, and with prayers for funds so that subsidized Bible paper for the press can be provided; **Nepal** – With thanks to God for the positive political change in the country which has been brought about through prayer, and with prayers for the National Council, the Executive Committee, and the entire staff of the Nepal Bible Society, and the translators working on the Nepali New Revised Version Bible; **Mongolia** – With prayers for the ongoing work to translate and check the Mongolian Scriptures and for the Mongolian Church which is carrying out this work and for the United Bible Societies and Summer Institute for Linguistics translation consultants who are helping them.

**Activity Corner:** “Waiting for Jesus with a Heart Filled with PEACE”

Supplies needed: Bible; Bible Concordance; small notebook or writing paper; pen/pencil.

The theme for the second week of Advent is PEACE. Look up the word PEACE in a Bible Concordance and then look up several Bibles passages that contain the word. How is peace expressed in each passage? Consider keeping an Advent Journal to record your thoughts and reflections. At the end of the week, prepare a prayer that incorporates your thoughts. Share your prayer with members of your household during a time of family devotion.

Throughout the Advent season, gather with members of your household and reflect daily on Christ’s Advent – his coming on Christmas as a baby in Bethlehem, his coming to you each day through the Holy Scriptures and prayer, and his promise to come again at the close of the age. The Bible readings for Advent remind us to remain alert and faithful as we prepare for and await our Lord’s coming. If you are using an Advent Wreath, light the first two candles prior to the Scripture reading for the day.

Sunday	Isaiah 11:1-9
Monday	Micah 4:1-5
Tuesday	Micah 5:2-5a
Wednesday	John 14:1-14
Thursday	John 14:15-31
Friday	1 Thessalonians 5:12-28
Saturday	Psalm 122

Conclude each day's reading with prayer and singing the first two verses of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" or one of your favorite Advent carols.