

Advent 2C: Luke 3:1-6  
December 9, 2018  
St. George's Episcopal Church  
Fr. Chris

## **Preparations**

### **“Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord...”**

‘Be Prepared!’ is the old Boy Scout motto.  
But ‘Be Prepared’ how and for what?

Most of the time when we talk about being prepared, we are talking about being ready for some event in life. We obviously are busy getting ready to be prepared for a holiday. We busy ourselves preparing for a trip. We even prepare ourselves to go to work or school. How do we do that?

We do that by focusing our attention and our minds.

- We make to-do lists.
- We ask ourselves about what is needed? This usually implies shopping, getting the things we think we need to be ready.
- The next question, then, is: What must I do to be ready? That will likely lead me to make a list of things in my mind or on a piece of paper depending how organized I want to be, to get ready and prepare.
- And if I don't know the answer as to how to get prepared, I might ask for help. Tell me or help me get ready. I can't do it all myself.

We are not here to suggest or tell people how to get ready for the holidays. You already know that and your preparations are well underway, I am sure, by now. But my question this morning is, What do you think is needed in your life for God to enter in when God comes? This is the spiritual question of the season isn't it? How do I make myself ready for God? Here are some of my thoughts on this.

It seems to me that we all need space and quiet in our lives, don't we, for God to enter in? Scripture speaks of the “still small voice of God.” In 2 Kings 19: 11-13 it recounts the experience of the prophet Elijah when he encountered God. Please remember the signs of the end times we spoke of last week as I read the passage: “Then God said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord. Behold, the God is about to pass by.” And a great and mighty wind tore into the mountains and shattered the rocks before God, but God was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire, but God was not in the fire. And after the fire came a still small voice.

When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?...”

How can you hear the voice of God speaking to you above all the din and noise of daily life? We must make room in the inn for God to enter in. There must be space in your heart. That is where the house cleaning begins. We need space and quiet to listen to God.

- Clear away the junk!
- Remove the clutter, both material and in your mind.
- Get rid of all things filling up your material space at work and at home: the excess stuff only makes us feel more anxious and also unprepared.
- Clean out the clutter in your mind: the long list of to-do's, many of which may have expired while sitting on the shelf.
- Clean out the clutter in your mind by reducing the amount of commitments piling up on you there, if you can. We often feel the weight of too many commitments and worries. These obscure your number one commitment, which is to God. If you want to ‘have yourself a merry little Christmas,’ do something about these now. Go on a commitment diet.
- Accept the things you can't change in your life, and change the things you can, in the words of the “Serenity Prayer.”
- Yes, repent when you realize you must and what you truly need to repent of.
- Go out and get the things that are truly spiritually needed: and I don't mean run out to buy a cross or some other religious image either. The thing that is needed is to go out, love, and care for others in word and deed. And if you can't find the words to express the good news and love of God, surely these can be expressed in your actions and deeds. I was reminded of this by the quotation of St. Francis from a plaque given to the pastor of President George H. W. Bush, Dr. Russell Levenson Jr., of St. Martin's Episcopal Church, which says: “Preach Christ at all times. If necessary, use words.” And so we return to a voice sounding in the wilderness: “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness of the desert of our lives: Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make God's paths straight. Every valley shall be filled; every mountain and hill shall be made low. And the crooked shall be made straight, the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God coming to them.”

Sssshhh. Hush now...do you hear the call, that voice? It is crying out in the wilderness of our lives. Prepare ye the way of the Lord!

As I walk on the Bolton rail trail, which I sometimes do, I am reminded of this passage, and I think about how our forbearers accomplished the words of this

passage without any modern equipment to move the big rocks and hills that were in the way, and how they used the stone to fill up the valleys to make a straight way for a train to pass through this territory of this diverse Bolton landscape. And they accomplished this, against all odds! Now I walk on it thinking about how it is a metaphor for my own life and yours, how it indicates there is hope for us to get ready and be prepared as I walk in that quiet space. Yes, we can move mountains in our lives, and funny thing is, I know God will be there to help us. He is helping me every day. Prepare Ye the way of the Lord! AMEN