

Advent 2 B
St. Mark 1:1-8
December 10, 2017
St. George's Bolton
Fr. Chris

Making Room!

“As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” — “a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare ye the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

We are now more than a week into our more serious preparations for Christmas. Advent is here, a time for making a new beginning of your life, a fresh start, a second or third chance to get it right.

Preparing for Christmas means decorating our homes. Preparing for Christmas means shopping for gifts, and figuring out what to give everyone. Preparing for Christmas means cleaning our homes to welcome guests for the holidays, even before we set up the tree and other decorations.

For me, preparing for this Christmas has meant cleaning out the stuff I have saved over the years. Some of it is upstairs in my closets, while other things are downstairs in my storage locker. I have too much stuff saved from over the years. I am trying to live some of the simplicity and minimalism we studied earlier this past year at the adult forum. My Christmas preparations are a good example to me and an opportunity to practice what I preach.

Minimalism teaches us to keep the good things that we love and really use, appreciate, that bring us joy. Things that contribute to our anxiety are those things that just clutter our lives. I am working on trying to get rid of the clutter in my life to prepare for Christmas this year.

For just one example, I have two extra Christmas wreathes being stored from year to year in my locker. Why? It's truly amazing what we save and hoard, hang onto from year to year, that we don't really need at all. Why? I know my reasoning that was highlighted in our minimalism studies: I tell myself that I should keep it—hang onto it—‘just in case I will need it in the future.’ That day has never come. I haven't used them in years! They could be used by people I know who can't afford a wreath for their door. Now, they are packed up and ready for delivery next week. Prepare ye the way of the Lord: make his paths straight. Clean the junk in your life out of His way so He can enter in. Let go and let God.

As I was pondering my own decluttering to prepare for Christmas, I began to think about how this resonates with the rest of my spiritual life, how there needs to be some decluttering in there to get ready for Christmas. What we hang onto in our hearts, you know, messages of failure, hurt, anxiety and anger, even hate about those who have hurt us. These things are more than enough to clog the arteries leading into our hearts. Such stress-producing clutter blocks our

growth spiritually and forms a wall behind which we can hide which we suppose keeps God from entering in. However, God has ways of grabbing our attention, and God will enter into our spiritual homes for a visit, whether we are ready or not. God often comes when we least expect. And here we go with Advent again...what time is it? Be prepared. Be ready, for you know not the hour he is coming! Prepare ye the way of the Lord.

What is the junk in your life you have been storing away, making the path of God crooked? What is blocking God in your life? Would that it were as easy as a few extra Christmas ornaments to get rid of!

I think that the “F’S” get us blocked up and clog our arteries in our spiritual hearts. Don’t recognize the generic name for them? We all know them too well:

- Fear blocks us from taking the risk of faith...
- Frustration distracts our focus away from God...
- Feelings of Failure consume our souls and being...
- Issues with Forgiveness-Forgiving others or being Forgiven yourself...
- Few Friends—you need to be one to have one...
- Finances—enslave us to the things of this world instead of God...
- Fitness—poor stewardship of the temple which God has given to you is like rejecting the value of the gift...
- Feelings Frozen—unable to feel or fearful of allowing yourself to feel anything...
- Frozen in place: God’s Frozen Chosen

We need to expel and expunge the “F’s” in our lives. Prepare by paring these one by one out of your life. Make a fresh beginning. As we begin a new Church year, we prepare. It is high time for church new year’ resolutions. That is what Advent is all about.

How do you prepare the way for God to come into your life?

- Make room in your heart.
- Make room in your mind.
- Make room in your soul.

Clear out the cobwebs. Make the seeming mountains in the way move out of your way. If you can’t move them with your heaviest equipment, consider blasting them out of your life. And fill in the valleys of your life with good things. Make God’s path straight through what was once a wandering in the wilderness.

This is a season of light. The light of our lives is coming into the world. I heard a Rabbi speaking about Chanukah on TV recently. He said something that really caught my ear, “A little light dispels the vast amounts of darkness.” This season is all about light, and bringing more of it into your life. We live in darkness. Everything about Advent and Christmas is about increasing the light in this dark season. Do not be overcome by the darkness, but rather, overcome the darkness with light. Every little bit makes a big difference, as the Rabbi said. “A little light dispels the vast amounts of darkness.”

Jesus is the light of the world and our lives. Let your light so shine before others that they may see your joy, love and kindness, and give glory to your God in heaven.

AMEN !

