

St Pius & St Anthony 2nd Sunday Advent 2025 (C)

What a lineup- Caesar, Pilate, Herod, Pilate, Philip, Lysanias, Annas & Caiaphas, and Luke 3:2 tells us “the word of God came to John....in the desert.” John, in that company, is the unlikeliest Pick? This introduction to John, made me flash back in memory to that dreaded moment, the terrifying experience we went through as kids when we went to play neighborhood football in the corner lot, and the moment came at the beginning when we stood in a line and the two oldest kids made themselves captains and began to pick their teams. “I’ll take Scott, I’ll take Dennis, I’ll take David,.... And on and on.....” Of course, I always got brought in as last draft pick. But once or twice, and so unlikely at that, I might get picked in second round (probably only because the older boys were fighting or mad at each other, and wanted to put each other down by rejecting the other, each other or just out of pity), but an early call up for me was unlikely! Kind of like today’s gospel, when we hear that ‘the word of God came **to John** in desert’ – he would not have been the expected first round pick for the ‘Word of God to come to’!

Really, thinking of it now, I should not have been so terrified of that ‘draft pick’ lineup moment. No, what should have shook me was the constant threat of hurt/injury from takedown tackles on that hard as concrete dirt field! It is a testament to God’s grace, that I made out of childhood with no broken bones? (only a couple of stitches, lot of blackeyes, but no broken bones-that is testimony to God’s good grace!) So, again, it is that unlikely that Luke 3:2 “the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert.”

This is different and not seen coming. **John?** Think of those big names glossed over: that the word of God didn’t come to Tiberius **the emperor**, word of God didn’t come to Pontius Pilate the **governor**, word of God didn’t come to **King** Herod overseeing Galilee, his powerful brother Philip or even Lysanias in their positions. But most relevant, considering the message of God’s word, is that fact that the word of God didn’t come to the **high priests** in the Temple, Annas or Caiaphas (Isn’t that their business?). But, No, the word of God came to John in the desert!

That is a message for us about Advent! God will surprise. God will pick unexpected places and people to surprise us by His Grace. God chooses and selects according to standards unlike what we expect! Advent reveals that we will be surprised by God’s coming to us! Recall the example, about who God chose to lead his People back in the time of King Saul—he was the last person named in our Jesse Tree this morning-David. How does that story go? 1 Samuel 16:10-12 tells us that God sent Samuel the prophet to go to great Jesse’ house to pick the

next king from among his strong sons. It says, “Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen any of these” Which made Samuel ask Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” and Jesse replied, “There is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep.” Samuel said to Jesse, “Send for him.....” And when David walked in from the field, “The LORD said: ***There—anooint him, for this is the one!***” That was a surprise! Who did God pick? Well, God was doing something new and unexpected!

In John’s case, even the name difference of him from his dad, should hint about how God works ‘outside the box’. The reading (Luke 3:2) tells us that John is the son of **Zechariah**? Wait, that is not normal. John is not called Zechariah the 2nd (Jr) , or not some variation of that name - like Zachary or even Zeke-that is expected. No, John is John. That name means God is Gracious- and God’s grace is an unexpected blessing! John unexpectedly is not falling into place, lock-step behind his father who did regular Temple Duty Service. No, John is not found in Jerusalem Temple serving God, but he’s out in desert offering sacrifice there (not animals sacrificed-his sacrifice is his own fasting & poverty), John’s purification rituals are not burnt animals in Temple, but a baptism of repentance in desert. ***The desert is his Temple***, and it is there and to him that the ‘Word of God comes’! God saying something with that! His unique name means again, that God is gracious- God will surprise you! Not only is John’s whole birth and life a surprise, when we recall that his parents Zechariah and Elizabeth were advanced in years, and barren, when Gabriel delivered good news of them-that they were to expect a baby! But also, in this life of John, God shows that He can make the barren desert bear fruit! How does that happen? That is Advent—surprised by God’s grace

We hear OT prophecies about God working about New things to shock us, as when Isaiah proclaimed that (Isaiah 43:19) God said, “See, I am doing something ***new!*** It springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the wilderness I make a way, *in the wasteland, I make rivers.*” The book of Revelation confirms God’s this, when in Rev. 21:5, He announces “Behold, ***I make all things new.***”

God chooses the unexpected.... Where and how He will be enter be born into our world? Who saw it coming, God showing up in little helpless baby in, out to the way little ole’ Bethlehem and not even in a house (but stable, cave, shed). God chooses the unlikely to deliver his grace, to manifest Himself to us.

This unlikeliness in Advent, means to inspire hope in us – the promise of change – that god can work in us-yes unexpectedly! We are not stuck, we are not locked in, we don’t have to feel resigned to things always being the same old same old. Advent offers us the chance of a new beginning, God doing something

new in each one of our lives. That is the 'repentance' John preaches. We can be made new – change from an old pattern of sin, into a new habit of grace. Change is possible. The word of God can come to us, wherever we are, in our desert, our feeling stranded or sterile in an old routine. Advent tells us that God brings that newness unexpectedly. So let's ask ourselves this Advent, "What can be conceived new within us? Where in my life is God showing up to bring that freshness, unexpectedly, of new life in Him?" The promise of change is real in Advent. God will bring it. And count on it, God may be showing, and calling, where you are not looking?