

THE PROMISE OF PEACE



Reading:

Luke 3:1-6 (NLT)

(Assign someone to read.)

Reflection

On this second Sunday of Advent, we hear the voice of John the Baptist, a voice crying in the wilderness, bringing a promise of peace and restoration both for then and now. As a skilled historian, Luke places John's calling to preach within human history. As noted in the Jerusalem Bible commentary (fifth edition): "Luke establishes a synchronism between secular history and salvation history."

Verses 1 and 2 provide several references to locate these events in time. He begins by mentioning political leaders representing the Roman Empire and its dominance over the Jewish people, followed by two religious leaders: High Priests Annas and Caiaphas.

In his Gospel, Luke carefully highlights the political and social context in which both John and Jesus were born and carried out their ministries (1:5, 2:1-7). But why does Luke emphasize this historical setting? First, he seems intent on showing that the political powers of his time—like those of today—do not occupy the central stage in salvation history.

Human political powers have always been influential but are ultimately subordinate to God's power and plan (Neale, p. 91). Neither the Roman Empire, with its so-called "Pax Romana," nor today's governments can offer true peace. On the contrary, governments often enact laws that benefit the powerful at the expense of the vulnerable, threatening our peace. True peace can only be found in the One whose coming John proclaims.

Second, theologian Justo González points out that the theological significance of these historical details lies not in pinpointing the exact date of this event—though scholars have identified it as occurring between AD 28 and 29—but in understanding what the political context represented for the Jewish people.

"It was now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea; Herod Antipas was ruler over Galilee; his brother Philip was ruler over Iturea and Traconitis; Lysanias was ruler over Abilene. Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests.

At this time a message from God came to John, son of Zechariah, who was living in the wilderness. Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. Isaiah had spoken of John when he said, 'He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him!

The valleys will be filled, and the mountains and hills made level. The curves will be straightened, and the rough places made smooth. And then all people will see the salvation sent from God.'

GOD BRINGS A MESSAGE OF RESTORATION AND PEACE TO HIS PEOPLE

The situation was far from favorable, as all the figures Luke mentions in the first two verses—including the religious leaders—symbolized the foreign domination of the Jewish people. Like us today, the Jews of Jesus' time were not the protagonists of their own history. John's message is therefore one of hope and peace for all people. In verses 3 to 5, he quotes Isaiah 40:3-5, where God, through the prophet, brings a message of restoration and peace to His people, who were exiled in Babylon. God promises their future liberation through His intervention.

However, John uses Isaiah's prophecy to announce a special liberation from God that would be accessible to everyone: "All people will see the salvation sent from God." What would this require? In verse 3, John summarizes his message: be baptized and repent. Repent of sins and turn to God for forgiveness. }

Repent from anything that prevents us from loving God above all and loving our neighbor—especially those closest to us in our homes. This call to repentance is a personal invitation to search within us for what separates us from God and our neighbor. It urges us to remove the beam from our own eye rather than focusing on the speck in another's.

When we are right with God and our neighbor, we can experience true peace regardless of external circumstances. Is your life right with God and your neighbor today? How is your relationship with those closest to you—your family? This second Sunday of Advent, let us celebrate the peace God brings into our family life.

PREPARE TO WORSHIP

Turn off all the lights and light last week's candle.

The second Advent candle is the Angel's Candle (violet), symbolizing Peace. The night Jesus was born, a choir of angels, messengers sent by God, appeared to shepherds near Bethlehem with a song of peace: "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." (Luke 2:14). Jesus' birth was a burst of peace piercing through the darkness.

As we await Christ's return, when His peace will reign everywhere, we are called to seek peace and be peacemakers.



Light this week's candle—a violet one.

Today, we see two candles lit: the Candle of Hope and the Candle of Peace. It fills us with peace to know that God's light is increasing while the darkness is diminishing. As we prepare to celebrate the arrival of our Savior, the light of two candles reminds us to be peacemakers in a world burdened by particularly within homes.

Let us demonstrate our love for God by loving our neighbors and those close to us, setting examples of lives filled with peace, free from anxiety and worry. Advent is a time of remembrance and preparation. As we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth, let us share the good news of God's love, who sent His Son to give us peace.

In worship, we light the Angel's Candle, symbolizing peace. Let us remember that we are called to prepare pathways of peace wherever we are, seeking peace for ourselves and guiding others to receive God's divine gift of peace.

Extinguish the candles.

Conclude with a prayer together. Assign someone to lead the prayer.

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