

Monday Quotes



Grain

“O come, O come, Emmanuel.” Hymn

Field

1 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." 3 This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' " 4 Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, 6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit worthy of repentance. 9 Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Matthew 3:1-9

Thoughts

A striking aspect of parish life during my first year in the ministry was witnessing the wide range of emotions people expressed around this time of year. My family has had its own variety of holiday drama. But that personal frictions and joys intensified to the degree that they did for so many others building up to Christmas was a surprise. I knew one person who was so in love with the holiday she went into a slight post-Christmas depression each year. Some dreaded it because of family conflicts, the absence of a loved one, or not having enough. Many found the season mixed.

We are all preparing the way for something in our personal lives at Christmas. Even if you wanted to get rid of all the social trappings and pressure, that would be difficult. Maybe it's better to ask what else? In whatever way you anticipate Christmas what else are you preparing for?

John the Baptist always shows up in our Advent texts because he prepared the way for Jesus. Imagine adding John as a guest to a family gathering: “You brood of vipers, don’t brag to me about your family tree. Stop looking at Uncle Bob. He won’t save you. Get ready! Repent! Your imagined perfection is not who you are.” Maybe his speech would quiet and slow down as he looked off in the distance and then back at you. “You have an identity in your baptism. Jesus is on his way, is already with us.”

The word “Emmanuel,” meaning God with us, is not in this lesson but comes up a lot in Matthew. What exactly was Matthew’s story? He seemed to be a tax collector, likely making him unpopular. Was he alone? Did he have a family? Whatever his situation, he knew the mystery of Emmanuel and how God’s presence uncovered unexpected places of love and value.

In our preparations for Christmas, let us be intentional about adding something else. Recall the message that God is with us and how that leads us to engaging in the world. Happy Monday!

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy