



Grain

1 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. ²The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:1-2

Field

³In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” ³This 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.’” ⁴Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins... ¹¹“I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” Matthew 3:1-12

Thoughts

John the Baptist came from a priestly family but left the subjugating powers of the empire and the religious leaders in collusion with it, to dwell in the wilderness. He dressed, ate, and spoke like a wild man, free from social constraints but disciplined in his asceticism for God. He stepped into a natural river and reached down into the water to baptize. What else was he reaching for?

What are we reaching for? I am aware that there are churches searching for ways to connect with nature. Are those communities simply interested in enjoying the outdoors? Are they experiencing an urgency for climate justice, which John could not have imagined, seeking more of a relationship with rather than domination of God’s creation? The Northern Great Lakes Synod is in partnership with the Episcopal Diocese to support [UP Wild Church](#). The South-Central Synod of WI’s Care for God’s Creation team, under the direction of Meg Nielsen, is using resources from Church in the Wild. Midvale Lutheran Church in Madison is an example of a congregation that has started a regular worship service in which the members take a walk in nature that ends with communion.

Jesus also journeyed into the wilderness but did not remain there. He challenged exaggerated needs leaders had for others to defer to them, idols of wealth, and false notions about where God is present. But he did this within the thick of society, where he also attended wedding feasts and would show up in places of power as well as at the tables of people ostracized.

There was a place for John in the wilderness preparing the way of Jesus. John’s ascetic lifestyle is not for most people, but what part of John inspires us to recognize what is just and unjust in our relationships with our neighbor and the earth? What wildness in how God worked through the ancient baptizer shapes our public speech today? Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy