

## Have we paved the way for His Coming?

### 2 Advent C

'Prepare the way of the Lord'

Roadwork! I'm glad most of it is done just in time for winter. Prepare the way for the snow! In the Habitat for Humanity newsletter their office is thanking workers and donors for the completion of the house on Harrison Avenue in Beloit. They prepared the way for a new life for new homeowners. In the same way the prophecy of Isaiah was spoken by John to get God's people ready for the coming of the Messiah.

The timing of God's word coming to John is an interesting one. John is not in the city where he could easily reach out and be heard by hundreds and maybe thousands of people. No, instead he is in the wilderness where there is no one to hear. He had to make the decision to leave his "comfort zone" and go to spread the news. He probably went from the countryside to where people lived and worked. He had to get an audience after all.

All the people would have heard about the coming of Messiah potentially many times in their lifetime, because they all went to synagogue in those days. John would have told God's word to them to connect this prophecy with the folklore that one day there would be a man that would come to save the Jewish people. The promised Messiah was coming to Israel.

John is a messenger of God. His job is to get the people prepared and in shape. The words of Isaiah paint a grand entrance for the Lord's coming. The message to the people is "*Prepare yourself and your families. Take notice!*"

Now a well dressed guy in a decent tunic, hair combed, looking like George Clooney, might get some attention from a good cross section of people. Instead, God sends a man who has not slept in days, dressed in cheese cloth looking like Charles Manson. That's a scary picture! Nevertheless, God sends John and he is the right guy for the job! John has prepared himself. He exudes the spirit of God, and people listen to him.

Max Lucado tells the story of a man who had been a closet slob most of his life. "He just couldn't comprehend the logic of neatness. Why make up a bed if you're going to sleep in it again tonight? Why put the cap\ on the toothpaste tube if you're going to take it off again in the morning? The man admitted to being compulsive about being messy.

Then he got married. His wife was patient. She said she didn't mind his habits ... if he didn't mind sleeping on the couch. Since he did mind, he began to change. He said he enrolled in a 12-step program for slob. A physical therapist helped him rediscover the muscles used for hanging up shirts and placing toilet paper on the holder. His nose was reintroduced to the smell of Pine Sol. By the time his in-laws arrived for a visit, he was a new man.

But then came the moment of truth. His wife went out of town for a week. At first he reverted to the old ways. He figured he could be a slob for six days and clean on the seventh. But something strange happened. He could no longer relax with dirty dishes in the sink, or towels flung around the bathroom or clothes on the floor, or

sheets piled up like a mountain on the bed.

What happened? Simple. He had been exposed to a higher standard of living. That's what Jesus does." -- Max Lucado, *In the Grip of Grace* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1996), 116-117.

That was John's job as well...to guide them to a new standard to live by. He wanted to get people to cut a better path in their lives so they would mentally and spiritually be ready for Jesus. He did not have the exact time of arrival, but he knew the people had to prepare now.

How does one get ready for a visit from someone he or she loves? You don't wait until *after* they arrive...your preparations are done *in expectancy* of their arrival. If you have been living to a higher standard all along...then the preparation will be smooth and easy. If you have put all the necessary changes off, the problem will be harder to clean up, and will require a lot of commitment. But the results will be worth it.

At my house we are starting now to decorate because my daughter Christina is coming from San Diego and she brags to her friends about Wisconsin and how her mom always decorates for Christmas. Mom is not about to disappoint that expectation. Robyn is making the changes now, so that all will be ready when the time comes.

How about us? If Jesus came tomorrow, would all be ready for Him? Are we ready to go the extra mile now to get ready for a visit from God; even if some stranger is the one chosen to tell us that we should be ready? Might we be in need of pursuing a higher standard of living that gets us to change the old ways for some new?

Perhaps we have some serious preparations to make.... or perhaps there are just some small changes that can be made so Jesus won't need to go around in circles or follow a crooked road to get to us. Let us pray...

"Grant O Lord, that by the gate we open to you, you may find a closer walk with us. We want to prepare the way for your coming. We need help to make straight your path. May we welcome your messenger, your message and your visit among us. Amen."