

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Dec 8th 2013

We are in a time of waiting, of anticipation, of hope. And the words of Isaiah in the first reading are such vivid representations of that hope: a world where the poor and afflicted are judged with justice. We won't be judged by our appearances and the world will be infused with a spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and strength. We all want to see a world where the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. These beautiful words instill hope in all of us that the world could be a better place. The images we envision seem beyond our control: How can I help the cow and the bear be neighbors? As these words are a signal to nations, the words are also a signal to my own heart. What can I do to infuse my own corner of the world with a spirit of wisdom and understanding? How can I show a spirit of counsel and strength? In the morning, when I dress, I can make justice a band around my waist and buckle the belt of faithfulness on my hips. I can stop myself from judging by appearances, instead looking beyond what's on the outside. We all are afflicted and need the grace of God and each other. I can look beyond myself to others.

The Gospel reminds us that we are all crying out in the desert. We need to prepare the way of the Lord. We are reminded that we can count on God's forgiveness, but we have to act, we have to "produce good fruit as evidence of our repentance." This is how we make straight our paths, by asking God for forgiveness and hope. We can buckle that belt of faithfulness on our hips and live out the Gospel. We are waiting for the birth of Jesus, but the birth of what he means in our lives can bloom and flourish every day. It takes work and mindfulness to show that spirit of wisdom and understanding, but the God of endurance and encouragement will work with us. Our time of hope can be a time of making straight the paths to our own hearts.

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