

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Dec 19th 2016

Advent is a time of preparation. As I write this, I'm preparing for finals and grading. By the time you read this, my grades will be in and I'll be preparing for the holidays, buying presents. The readings today talk about preparations in a way. The stories in the readings are preparing us for Christmas in several ways.

In Judges, an angel comes to Manoah's wife, who is barren, but tells her she will have a baby, a son, who will do wonderful things. She is told that her son will prepare the way for the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines. He will start the process, but, alas, will not finish it. Samson was not the savior of his people, but he prepared the way for those who would come after him to continue the work and eventually deliver Israel from the Philistines.

In the Gospel reading an angel comes to Elizabeth, who was barren, but tells her she will have a baby, a son, in her old age. That son is John, the Baptist, who prepares the way for the Lord. John's birth prepares the way for Jesus' birth, and when he grows up John will turn many of the Children of Israel to the Lord their God, and prepare the people for Jesus. John is not the savior, but he prepares the way for the savior of the world.

Both of these stories prepare the way for Christmas. They tell of barren women who nonetheless conceive and bear children who will change the world. Samson starts the process of Israel's deliverance from the Philistines. John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus, whose mother Mary is a virgin, but nonetheless conceives a son who will change the world. Samson prepares the way for those who will deliver his people. John prepares the way for Jesus, who will deliver us all. Everything that came before prepared the way for Jesus and nothing was the same after.

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