

December 8, 2024 - 2nd Sunday in Advent

***“COME ON DOWN” by Pr. Julio Romero***

**Gospel: Luke 3:1-6**

One catchphrase that we are all familiar with is the famous phrase “Come on Down” from the TV show *The Price is Right*. The phrase “Come on Down” is used to invite audience members to the stage to become contestants on the game show. Following the sound of the announcer, contestants come running down the aisle with a big smile.

This is what this Gospel reminds me of when it says, “The word of God came to John, son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” In these words from the Gospel of Luke, I can hear the voice of God calling to John the Baptist: “Come on down, John. Come to the region of the River Jordan; I have a mission for you.”

John was invited by God to the Jordan River to baptize and invite others to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus. This Gospel begins with a list of people who needed to come down to the Jordan River, people who needed to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. Their names are all familiar to us: the Roman Emperor Tiberius, King Herod, the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate, the High Priest Caiaphas, and some others.

All these people mentioned by Luke in this Gospel were figures of power and authority. Their names alone probably evoked fear and unfriendly feelings in most people. As we know their stories, it is easy for me to say that they needed heavy machinery to make their mountains and hills low, to make their ways straight to meet the Lord Jesus—something they did not do.

I believe that by mentioning all these names, Luke is trying to set the stage for someone whose name and ways were not associated with power, wealth, fear, or military and political authority. That name is “John.”

Who was John?

People in those days might have said that this strange-looking man was a nobody, perhaps even a madman. In the Gospel of John, John the Baptist refers to himself as just a voice, a voice crying out in the wilderness.

If Luke was trying to draw a contrast between John and all those people he mentioned at the beginning of this Gospel, let me tell you, he succeeded very well. But the contrast doesn't end with what those names represented or what people associated with them. The contrast also exists in what or who dwelled inside them, or what it was that inspired them to be who they were.

I recently heard someone say that the people of God are to be good news before they share the Good News. Well, that's what John the Baptist was—he was good news before he shared and announced the Good News that Jesus was coming, that the long-awaited Messiah was on His way and about to begin His mission.

Luke says that John was the son of Zechariah, who was a priest, married to Elizabeth, a cousin of Mary. John was the son promised by God to Elizabeth and Zechariah at a time when their dreams of becoming parents seemed impossible. They had grown older, or at least beyond the age of conceiving a child.

John the Baptist, right from the beginning, was good news to his parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth. He was also good news because his life was about preparing the way, to serve and welcome the Lord Jesus. There were not too many mountains and hills to make low for John—he was God's prophet, a righteous man. Definitely, John was good news before he shared the Good News.

We cannot say the same for those people whose names we read at the beginning of this Gospel, but that doesn't mean that the Lord was not talking to them, or that the word of God did not come to them. Let's remember that the word of God came directly to King Herod: Jesus, on the night of His arrest, talked to him. The same is true for the High Priest Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate; they all heard the word of God directly from God's mouth, but they rejected it. They were very comfortable on their high mountains and hills of power and wealth and would not hear the word of God. They would not level those mountains and hills to see, in the young carpenter from Nazareth, God in human flesh.

The Word of God not only came to John, it came to those people too—and it keeps coming to us now. God is telling us, "Come on down." Level and flatten those mountains and hills that prevent you from meeting and welcoming My Son. Whatever those mountains and hills may be, make them disappear in your life. Make them flat for the Lord Jesus to walk into your life, let Him give rest to your soul, heal your spirit, take that burden away from you, and give you peace.

The reason the contestants on *The Price is Right* TV show run down the aisle with a big smile after hearing their names called and the invitation “Come on Down” is because they can win a big prize. I am sure that even before they get there, their minds are set on a new car, big cash, or a wonderful trip.

The word of God in this season of Advent is coming to us, and it is telling us “Come on down” to meet the Lord Jesus, to receive the reward for leaving the mountains and hills and crooked ways behind and welcoming the One who is the Truth, the Way, and the Life. We become what we receive. In Jesus, we receive Life, we receive the Truth and the Way because that is who He is. All of this is our reward, our big prize. In Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, there is redemption, there is hope, there is salvation. There is no bigger prize than this.

To welcome Jesus—to meet the One who comes into this world and into your life and my life, and who turns us into good news even before we share God’s Good News—that is a great blessing. So, “Come on down.” Let’s welcome the One we receive at Holy Communion and let’s become good news to the world as we follow the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.