

Forming Good Stewards

Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!

Please make sure this is distributed to the **pastor**, to the other **priest** and **deacons** in the parish, and to the **person who produces the bulletin**.

Bulletin Bites

December 2, 2018

First Sunday of Advent

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Option 1

“Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap.”

As we begin Advent to prepare for the birth of Jesus it is a bit strange to be reading about Jesus preparing his disciples for the Passion he knew was coming because his was a threat to the Jewish leaders and Roman authorities. But to fully appreciate and celebrate the Incarnation and Birth of God Made Man we must reflect upon the reason God became Man and the consequences he would endure to fulfill such a total act of love. Jesus is warning his disciples that his life and teaching would be a challenge to many and a threat to the powerful. He anticipated that his disciples would be tempted to abandon him when people rejected Him and took steps to silence Him. So, as we buy all the presents; trim the trees; string the lights; prepare the food and drinks; decorate for the parties, let us also take time to reflect upon the real reason Jesus came into the world. He came to teach us, by word and example, to love God, and our neighbor as ourselves. Let that be our gift to Jesus and let us never get caught without it “by surprise like a trap.”

Option 2

1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

“May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all.”

Saul of Tarsus was a Jew who studied under the Rabbi Gamilliel, a descendent of the great Rabbi Hillel. Saul would later be known as Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. On the road to Damascus Saul experienced a sudden awareness of God’s love for him and that God created all of us to love one another, without exception. It became clear to Saul that when God gave us all dominion for His creation, He did not make any exception. Paul accepted that *dominion brings responsibility*. We each exercise that dominion and must fulfill our responsibility as stewards of God’s creation by being grateful caretakers of all that we are and have so that we may be “blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all the holy ones.” Have we accepted responsibility for our portion of God’s creation? As we begin to prepare for Christmas we should ask, *What have we done with our portion? What are we doing with our portion? What will we do with our portion?*

December 9, 2018
Second Sunday of Advent
Luke 3:1-6

Option 1

“ . . . and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

There are two birthdays that most people, particularly Christians, probably never forget. Jesus and their own. They get presents on both birthdays. But John the Baptist did not go through the harsh land on the east side of the Jordan River, “crying out in the desert” calling people to put up lights on their house, decorate a tree with way too many ornaments and buy presents for people who may not even appreciate or use them. In fact, in the time of Jesus and John there would have been one or two lights from oil lamps inside a typical house at night, and no lights outside. On the rare occasion when presents were given or exchanged, they would have been made or cooked by the giver. John did not even tell people to buy a gift for Jesus. John was challenging the people of his day, and us, to get ready for the message of Jesus and to prepare to imitate him. John was saying that Jesus would be our light and would bring us the *gift of eternal life*. All Jesus wants from us in return is to accept His gifts and appreciate them.

Option 2

“Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.”

On this Second Sunday of Advent we hear a message about John the Baptist proclaiming a “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah.” Why, three Sundays before we celebrate the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity as the Son of God and the Son of Mary, are we hearing about John the Baptist? John was preparing the people of his day for the message and the mission of Jesus. The birth of Jesus is an event to celebrate, but the significance of the life, message and mission of Jesus seems to be lost in the commercialization and chaos of Christmas. To truly understand the message of Jesus and commit ourselves to carry out his mission we must live the obligations of our Baptism. Our gift for Jesus should be to do all we can *to prepare the way of the Lord and make straight his path - to our heart*. We do not need to shop for such a gift. It is **in our heart**.

December 16, 2018
Third Sunday of Advent
Luke 3:10-18

Option 1

“Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none.”

Campaigning for elections start months, even years, before the voting. Television is full of ads that get increasingly nasty as the election nears. Politicians promise whatever they think will get them elected. Sadly, many do not keep their promises. Imagine a campaign ad that challenged people: “If you have two good suits, share with the person who has none; share your food with others; stop selling products for more than they are worth to acquire excessive profits; do your part to support yourself and all dependent on you; do not falsely accuse anyone; and be satisfied with your wages,” and adds, “If elected I will adopt policies to make sure everyone does this.” Have you heard any politician say anything like that? Do you think that person would get elected? John and Jesus would have a hard time getting elected in our present culture. As we get close to Christmas John is telling us that Jesus did not come to be God Incarnate to get elected to public office, but so we could elect to imitate Jesus - like John did.

Option 2

“Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none . . .”

The crowds asked John the Baptist, “What should we do?” When he told them to give one of their two cloaks to someone who had none, they probably decided not to ask him any more questions because “He may tell us that if we see two people without cloaks we should give them both of our cloaks, and trust that the Lord God will supply our needs.” John was challenging them, and us, to acknowledge that everything we are and have was created by God and belongs to God, who intends for us to use it and enjoy it for ourselves and for others. John understood gratitude to God is the heart of generosity to others. In God’s magnificent plan we can become the vehicle that He uses to give to others. We give **to** others by giving **of** ourselves. One of our most precious gifts from God is our time. Whatever our length of days, how we choose to use our time for ourselves and others is our gift to God. It is a gift we can give to Jesus in celebration of His Birthday.

**December 23, 2018
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Luke 1:39-45**

Option 1

**Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah,
where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.**

When Mary, a teenager, was several months pregnant with a child conceived by a mysterious intervention by God, she made the difficult eighty mile journey south from Nazareth to Bethany to be with her elderly cousin Elizabeth, who was also pregnant. She would have made the difficult trip on foot, probably barefoot. Sandals were expensive and usually kept for special occasions. Mary’s trip to be with her cousin was not just a social visit with an older cousin. They both believed their child would fulfill the prophesy of Isaiah that the God of Abraham would send a herald to proclaim the arrival of the Son of Man, who would be the Savior of the world. At the time, they could not have know everything we now know from the Gospels. But they had faith. They accepted the roles that they believed God had called them to. And their faith is a challenge to us to believe that the son of Mary is God Incarnate and our Savior and Lord. Let us celebrate His birth with great joy because *Jesus is the Reason for the Season*.

Option 2

“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb . . .”

As we prepare to celebrate the Birthday of Jesus we hear of the encounter between the Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, and Mary, mother of Jesus the Christ. Both were excited about their unborn child. Both were happy that the other would soon give birth. They knew life is a gift from God. Like Elizabeth and Mary, we should celebrate new human life. On December 25th we celebrate the birth of Jesus. On June 24th we celebrate the birth of John the Baptist and his role as *a voice in the wilderness making straight the way of the Lord*. That is really what John would have us do. How do we celebrate the birth of Jesus? Are we excited about the prospect of the presents we will receive or worried about how we are going to pay for all the presents we bought to give others? Do we have a present for Jesus? The life and death of John challenges us to be *a voice in the wilderness making straight the way of the Lord* and to remember that *Jesus is the Reason for the Season!!!!* That would be our best present for Jesus.

December 30, 2018
The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
Luke 2:41-52

Option 1

Jesus was sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers.

St. Luke tells us of the journey of Jesus as a young boy to the great city of Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. With Joseph and Mary, their family and friends, including children his age, Jesus traveled from Nazareth and shared the rigors and dangers for the four day journey. Jesus, who would have played games with the other children along the way. They had to protect themselves; make camp each night; and cook food; rise early; break camp and continue traveling. In Jerusalem there would be many groups like them camped in the hills surrounding the City. After the Feast Jesus was attracted to the teachers in the Temple precincts who had studied the Law of Moses for many years. They were amazed by the wisdom of such a young boy, and the depth of his understanding of the God of all Creation. When Joseph and Mary realized Jesus was not with them, they returned to find Him in the Temple. They chided him for staying behind. He responded by saying he must be about his Father's business. And so must we. Are we?

Option 2

“He went down with them to Nazareth and obedient to them . . .”

St. Luke tells the only story in the Gospel about Jesus as a young boy. When Jesus was twelve His parents took Him to Jerusalem for the Passover and then unintentionally left Him behind. They return to find Him with Jewish rabbis and scribes who daily taught and debated the Law of Moses on the steps of the Temple [the equivalent to a modern university]. They were amazed by the wisdom revealed in His questions and answers. When Joseph and Mary find Jesus she scolds Him for staying behind. But then we learn the reason for the story. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity returns to Nazareth and is obedient to His human parents. Mary and Joseph freely submitted to the will of God to become the parents of Jesus. Then Jesus, God Incarnate, freely submitted to the will of His human parents. Free will is arguably our greatest gift from God. And the greatest gift we can give to God is to discern His will for us, and do it. Now that would be a great Christmas gift for Jesus. And we do not have to wrap it.