

**The Threshold of the New**  
Advent 2 2018  
St. Andrew's Anglican Church  
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**I speak with you this morning in the presence of God and the beloved people of God. Amen.**

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> year that Justin Trudeau was Prime Minister of Canada, while John Horgan was Premier of British Columbia and Colin Basran was entering his 2<sup>nd</sup> term as mayor of Kelowna, while the Diocese of Kootenay had 4 Episcopal Candidates...the Word of God came....

...it came to a man in the wilderness of grief who told me this week that he realized that he could continue to rage in the darkness or choose to stand in that Light which the darkness has not over come.

...it came to woman in the rehab ward of the hospital yesterday who sobbed at all she had lost from a stoke yet wept because of the great love of God that would never let her go and would see her through to what was next.

...the word of God came to John, son of Zechariah, in the wilderness...it came to no one of great importance and it came in that wilderness place. Like the man in grief and the woman in hospital, the word came to John when he had absolutely nothing but the space to listen for the voice of God. And in that place of bareness and openness John heard and he became the prophet through whom the whole great prophetic tradition found a voice again. The ancient promise that God would come to God's people, that years of the prophets calling people to repentance was finally being fulfilled. There in the middle of nowhere, John drew all of Israel's past wilderness experiences - their exile and loss, their wandering and testing, the journey from slavery to freedom - into what God is about to do. And as he wandered the region of the Jordan, that same river that the people crossed over into the promised land, he began to offer an invitation for the people to inhabit a fulfillment of God's promise much deeper than a physical land and home. All of the past is being gathered and fulfilled as John stands at the threshold of what God is about to do. As the 17<sup>th</sup> century British poet Edmund Waller wrote: "Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view, that stand upon the threshold of the new".

In Advent we are asked to stand with John upon the threshold of the new. To view both worlds at once: what is and what God has promised to bring about both within our own lives and the life of world. The Church is a threshold people called to stand in midst of wherever God places us, not with the notion of a some vague goodness at the heart of things or the general idea that one day it will be ok, but the stunning hope of the arrival of God who has come and will come and is bringing the kind of

freedom that the story of Israel's escape from slavery in Egypt only begins to touch; an exodus through seas far deeper than the red sea, a freeing of the human heart and soul from the cycles of sin and the reality death through the very life of God come to be with us. To humbly hold out the hope of a new way of being human together...hold it out for those we love, those we hate, for those who thinks we're crazy and to let others hold it out for us when, in midst of any kind of darkness, we can no longer see it.

In order stand in this threshold place with John, we need to spend time in wilderness, time where we choose to have absolutely nothing but the space to listen for the voice of God. To listen, to fall in love with the hope of Christ Jesus and to name what we need to let go of in or for God's promise to be born. John calls to us through the words of the prophet Isaiah this morning, saying the mountains and valleys in the topography of our lives and souls need to be leveled to make straight a thoroughfare so all will see the salvation of God. In other words, remove the obstacles, don't wait to do it, make the path straight!

We'll get much more of this from John next week but until then we can start by asking: when this week will we stop? Stop and listen and choose to remove everything but the space to listen to God? Maybe in the quiet of the early morning, in the sacred silence in our heritage church, in the space we make when we put the smartphone down or put away the never-ending work away. Our culture tells we don't want wilderness time and we don't have time for it but it is the place God is calling and where a new thing is coming into the world.

"Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view, that stand upon the threshold of the new".

Amen.