

BRIEF MEDITATION

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*“Preparing the Way for the Prince Of Peace”*

Imagine being in a dreamlike state and then having someone burst into the room loudly announcing that everything, everything, everything was going to change! Someone was coming! Someone unthinkable. Someone that would change the course of humanity and your life forever and ever.

What a wake-up call!

Maybe you would roll off the couch with excitement and run to the door, maybe you would rollover frozen in disbelief, maybe- maybe you would just be terrified and startled- perhaps even have the knee-jerk flight or fight response because, maybe you don't want things to change, because they are working out in your favor.

This was what John the Baptist was doing - announcing a change across the schemes and powers and kingdoms of Herod and Caiphas, a change that would threaten a kingdom, a entire way of being.

One scholar shares this:

If someone came into your town and told you that the President, or the Princess, or some other great person, was on their way to pay you a visit, you'd quickly rush around smartening things up. In Britain it's a standard joke that wherever the Queen goes she smells fresh paint. John was like the messenger going ahead of royalty, getting everywhere ready for the 'stronger one' who was coming after him. Israel as a whole needed smartening up. Each individual within Israel needed to smarten up. Someone was coming who would put even John in the shade. – NT Wright

*So let us hear these words from the John the Baptist from Mark 1:1-8:*

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight,'" so John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Today, the second Sunday in Advent we light the candle of Peace. Today we are reminded that the one whom John the Baptist announces is the same one Isaiah prophesied as The Prince of Peace. The Greek for peace is Eirene, and is found over 100 times in the new testament. Eirene draws its meaning from the Hebrew word Shalom, and connotes wholeness and well being, particularly through restored relationships between God and humans, and among humans themselves.

Now semantically speaking, Eirene is closely aligned with Blessing and wholeness, salvation Grace, Reconciliation through the new covenant, and the righteousness of the Kingdom of God. It is as if nothing falls beyond the semantic scope of Eirene- of Gods peace- of God's son whose kingdom shall no know end and whose peace is unlimited.

We all struggle to comprehend the peace that John was announcing.

I personally find a reflection of this divine peace in silence.

A week ago I was upland hunting a few hours up north. There tens of thousands of acres of public land there. And miles out in a road wilderness less area I had gotten a little off course, the roads crooked and absent, and was standing in the middle of a black spruce bog, their sparse dark blue-green limbs adorning trunks that nature bonsai'd over a great expanse of time . The lichen covered hummocks of bog once spongy and wet were now frozen solid and walkable, covered in scraggly blueberry bushes and miniature balsams. From the basin my dog and I could see forest stretched from horizon to horizon. Our spruce bog was ringed in layers of white

aspen trunks, then grey hardwoods like maple, all arranged by successive layers of regeneration up the hillsides. All this gently capped by under a steel grey sky. There was no wind, nothing moved, not a needle quivered. I could not hear anything; no cars no planes no sounds other than the emptiness of my breath from my nostrils which felt outrageously loud. Even my dog was frozen at my side, taking in the moment, studying everything around us. You could see the reflections of the trees in her eyes, she was so still. Somehow we found ourselves frozen, waiting, waiting for the unknown.

Have you known that kind of silence? The silence with such great depth that unnoticed beauty springs forth? The kind of silence that has gravity and dimension? Silence that weighs upon you from all angles such that you cannot help but give into its stillness and join, even if temporarily, in its wholeness?

This silence, is like the Peace of Christ, like the one that is coming. Its weight and dimensions speaks of ancientness, it calls us towards beauty. It breaks the back of the most thundering war and covers us once again- with Gods good creation.

Even the creatures will stop and look and wait.

Maybe we should smarten up like them, and stop and look and wait, this Advent season.

Maybe you sense dimensions and gravity of Christ's peace in silence, perhaps you find its weight in your hands when you serve, or you know its captivating completeness on the wings of stringed instruments or voice.

Whatever makes you stop, to smarter things up, remember, Prepare the way, says the voice of one crying out in the wilderness. Nothing falls beyond the scope of Eirene- of Gods peace. For even what some see as nothing but emptiness of the land and sky and stars themselves- even this is a wake up call which proclaims the glory of the child who is to come.

It is not a dream, it is God's enduring, hopeful filled promise. It is the Good news.

So this Advent, Eirene, Peace be with you. Amen.