

Daily Devotional, November 29, 2021 Yearning What is Much Greater Than Us

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Luke 3:15-16 (NIV)

We enjoy the good life. In comparison to most of the world, or much of human history for that matter, we have it made. Our expectation is that we can have the things we want, whenever we want. However, these past few years have humbled us. We have had to face the reality that we as a modern society have forgotten, or at least have chosen to ignore, the fact that there is much beyond our control. We have learned we cannot make the virus go away on our own timetable. The virus will not yield to our expectation that we are in charge and that we have the power. In fact, COVID-19 has taken a great toll on all of us, and on the nation that likes to believe we are greater than all others.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote that "the celebration of Advent is possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come." So we come to this season of Advent with troubled souls, a fresh awareness of our inadequacy and imperfection, and constantly reminded that we are in need of something much greater than ourselves.

The people of Israel had been waiting for the Messiah for centuries. They were oppressed by the Romans, and were powerless to change circumstances on their own. Anxiously they were waiting for God to fulfill His promise to send the One who would bring about their salvation. When John the Baptist came preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God, some thought that he might actually be the One. However, John the Baptist makes it clear that he was simply laying the foundation for the One they had long awaited. He sets the stage for Jesus, the One who will come with power and might. John the Baptist stirred something in their hearts: the expectation of Christ—the Messiah.

In this season of imperfection and diminished hope, may our hearts be stirred, and may our troubled souls focus on the One who gives us hope, in both the present life and in the life to come.

What are your expectations for this advent season? What do you sense God may be stirring in your heart?

Prayer: Lord, this year has made us impatient and tired of waiting. It has reminded us in so many ways that we are poor and imperfect. We are anxious to return to life as it used to be. In this season, help us to raise our expectations beyond our wants and our needs. Help us, instead, to look forward to a deeper experience of your presence in our lives in the days ahead. Amen.