

OneWith

Resources Section

Sunday Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/120620.cfm>

Gospel Reflection (by Greg Sunter)

This week's gospel captures beautifully the spirit of preparation and waiting that characterizes the liturgical season of Advent. John the Baptist is portrayed as fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah and others as the one who comes before the Lord preparing the way. He is a messenger, sent by God to "do the groundwork" preparing the people for the coming of the Christ. Although this passage is used during Advent as preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus, we know that John was a contemporary (indeed cousin) of Jesus and the time of preparation was immediately prior to Jesus' public ministry.

John appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism for forgiveness of sins. It may seem odd to think of going to the wilderness to try to influence people. Today we might think that the city center or street corner might be the better venue to preach something. What is it about the wilderness? Reference is made to the wilderness several times in scripture. It is used as a place of preparation and encounter with God. The wilderness referred to was a vast expanse of emptiness on the eastern side of the Jordan River. It was not uncommon for wandering preachers like John and Jesus to go out into the wilderness as a way of making a break from their previous life and getting themselves ready in body and spirit to begin their ministry. The wilderness to the east of the Jordan was also the place in which many of the rebels based themselves. There was a sense that challenge and unrest came out of the wilderness. In many ways that is what Jesus—heralded by John—brought out of the wilderness as well.

Questions for Teens

- Why would John have gone out into the wilderness to conduct his ministry?
- What do you think people found attractive about John's baptism of forgiveness?
- Why is the first sentence of the passage significant, given it is the very first sentence of the gospel of Mark?
- How can we continue to prepare the way for the Lord?

Questions for Adults

- Can you recall a time when you have had to consciously prepare yourself for what you were about to do?
- Why is the wilderness an appropriate image for preparation?
- Why does the gospel writer go to such lengths to associate John with the prophecies of history?
- How does this gospel passage relate to the Advent season?

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Optional Advent Video Resources:

“Seek”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tb9YVx26ljg>

“Christmas in a Nutshell”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXgH8ZIz9jQ>

“Christmas Spirit (The Right Way)” - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwBDXbUIJCw>

Advent Conspiracy:

- <https://vimeo.com/187692524>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsdOHQOoQfQ&t=>
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAKcjHNFhHg
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mq4Fmw8tdMg>

The Bible Project: (<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/the-advent-series/>)

- “Shalom/Peace” - <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/shalom-peace/>
- “Yakhal/Hope” - <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/yakhal-hope/>
- “Chara/Joy” - <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/chara-joy/>
- “Agape/Love” - <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/agape-love/>

Music Videos...

Better Than A Hallelujah - Amy Grant (*Sarah Hart song*):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rm5kx3xqmg0&index=10&list=RDular4xtYzdo>

Breath of Heaven - Amy Grant:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ular4xtYzdo&start_radio=1&list=RDular4xtYzdo&t=

Mary, Did You Know? – Pentatonix:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifCWN5pJGIE&list=RDular4xtYzdo&index=5>

O Come, O Come Emmanuel: Sovereign Grace:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JpvW9FU_Rg&list=RDular4xtYzdo&index=20

Looking for more resources on Advent?

- <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent/> (US Bishops site)
- <https://www.catholic.org/advent/advent.php?id=28> (Advent traditions from around the world)