The 2nd Sunday of Advent is often referred to as “John the Baptist” Sunday, it sets the tone for the season that before we come to rejoice and celebrate the birth of Christ, we must stand before God through our repentance, as we plead for the Lord’s mercy and forgiveness.

Forgiveness is meaningless without repentance, that’s why we have set aside time for confession and prayer every time we gather for worship before God. It puts us in the rightful perspective that we are all vulnerable in falling short of God’s plan in our lives.

Repentance also leads to fruit bearing. It would be selfish of us if we receive God’s assurance of forgiveness and not share and proclaim it to others. As John proclaimed that we shall “***bear fruits worthy of our repentance***.”[[1]](#footnote-1) The Gospel and the assurance of salvation do not belong to us, but rather it is freely offered to ALL who comes to faith in Him.

John, as you know, was not your typical prophet, at least not by the way he looked, the way he dressed, where he hanged out or his eccentric dietary menu. Some might consider him a trailblazer but others might call him a rebel or just some crazy man with a loud voice. Now, in order to understand the context more fully, we must not overlook the fact that it has been more than 400 years since the last prophet appeared. 400 years!!! How many generations is that? Do you remember what happened back in 1615? Things have changed, our world has changed, we do things differently than what it used to be…but God is still the same God who remains steadfast to God’s people. God’s promise remains in all of us and God’s hope is still alive today.

The voice of God had been silent during those 400 years. The people of Israel had gone astray with their sinful disobedience. They might have forgotten who this God was. They had turned to other gods or other forms of godliness. Upon God’s judgment, they were living under captivity of foreign rules and some were living in exile in diaspora. Those were the days under the prophet Isaiah, as we read earlier. The people were in a desperate outcry for God to make His presence known. They were longing for justice, comfort, and peace. They yearned for the day when the Messiah Savior would come to deliver them out of their misery. Some were abound in hope but others had fallen astray.

***"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5 Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."[[2]](#footnote-2)***

One could only imagine if God had forgotten all about the people? But just because there were no prophets during those years that did not mean that God was not present among God’s people. In fact, through those “silent” years, God was preparing the hearts of the people for the long expected Savior, just as during those 40 years when they were wandering out in the wilderness.

John’s message of repentance was a hard message for anyone to accept. He didn’t come bearing the Good News as people were hoping for but in fact his message was an alarming Wake-Up call for the people. Wake-up!!! Before it’s too late! It was a message of pleading the people of God to re-examine themselves and to prepare to take action for change….change in the direction back to God.

John’s message of repentance was a warning…an ultimatum for the people of the wrath to come. John made it very clear that he himself was NOT the Messiah as promised, but the one who is more powerful than he, would be coming after him. He was just the “appetizer” to the “main course”, the “opening act” of the “featured presentation.”

Come to think of it, many of us today are also longing and yearning for our Savior to come. Why can’t Jesus come right now to put an end to all of our miseries, long-suffering and pains. Too many of us are bearing the suffering consequences and consumed by the world of sins and darkness. Everyday we still hear voices crying out in great despair yearning for justice and peace. Many of us are also guilty of disobedience and have fallen astray from our God. Repentance is needed for all of us today!!

Seriously, not many of us like to be told what we’ve been doing is wrong and need to be awakened and changed? How many of us would feel comfortable when our sins have been exposed and we must face the retribution and recompense for our sins? But through John, God is offering us the message of hope and peace through our humble repentance. God is willing to reconcile with us through our repentance and the changing of the heart and the way we’ve been doing things all along?

**Furthermore, this message challenges us to take on a huge step of commitment towards faith, rather than fears.**  This is our spiritual “Wake up” call! Change might be frightful but if we stubbornly resist the calling of repentance, we would only perpetuate the fall through the slippery slope.

This week, as we have seen or heard from the news, we are once again faced with the harsh reality of more civil outcry for justice and mercy. This is an alarming wake-up call for a greater urgency to seek God’s peace and healing upon all of God’s people. As agents of God’s peace in this world, we share God’s healing and promise through the love that we share with others. We pray that the everlasting Prince of Peace shall come and re-establish His reign in us. ***“Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all of her sins.”[[3]](#footnote-3)***

This week also marked the one-year anniversary of the death of Nelson Mandela. He too was a voice that cried out in the wilderness, advocating for change and repentance out of South Africa. His prophetic voice might have been silenced, but his message continues to resonate in us today.

Much like John, Mandela sought reconciliation and justice in the people’s hardened hearts, especially those who were oppressors of basics of human rights and dignity. He overcame the system of injustice and oppression by instilling hope and forgiveness amongst people of all races and across all social spectrums. He offered us the courage to overcome fear and to seek light in the midst of darkness. In his very own word, he wrote ***“courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”***

During this season of Advent, instead of getting ourselves busy and all hyped up for the upcoming holiday, **may we be inspired and challenged once again by the “silent voices” that are crying out in the wilderness. God has commissioned us to be the “John the Baptist” and the prophetic voices of this world today.** Let us **look UP** in prayers to God and **look OUT** upon the anguished agonies and the painful scars in the lives of God’s people. May we be the agents of God’s hope to those who have lost loved ones due to systemic social injustice, those who are struggling financially to make ends meet, those who are lonely, depressed or spiritually lost.

Together we shall pray expectedly and patiently through faith. We pray for the Messiah to come and reestablish His throne once again. **Come, Lord Jesus Come!**

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Matthew 3:8* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Isaiah 40:3-5* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Isaiah 40:1-2 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)