*“Can things get better before it gets any worse? Can things be turned around? We need someone, like a Messiah-type who can step in and turn this sinking ship around.”* Those are just some common questions and comments we hear whenever an organization is in trouble, whether it is a sport team that’s having consecutive lousy seasons or a company that is underperforming, falling short of meeting its goals and expectations.

 Very often we like to point our fingers at someone and play the blame game on who’s at the top management level and make him or her a scapegoat. Why don’t we just simply get rid of the coach of the team or the manager of the company and start over again with a clean slate…then everything would be all fine! Problem’s solved, right? Well, not so fast! That’s just a quick fix, replacing a band-aid to stop the internal bleeding that is taking place. The problem lie within and if we don’t examine our attitude and address the core of the problem, the internal bleeding will continue to occur.

 On this 2nd Sunday of Advent, traditionally known as “John the Baptist” Sunday, all of us are invited to take a closer look at our own spiritual walk and identify areas in which we need to repent and begin the process of turning things around. What’s wrong with us?

 This is not an easy question to answer. Some may feel that they do not need to answer it at all. We’re fine the way we are. There’s no need for us to make any kind of adjustment. Why do we need to examine our lives for? Why do we need to change at all?

 Forgiveness is meaningless if repentance never took place, that’s why we have set aside time for personal and corporate confession and prayer every time we gather for worship. This, however, does not grant us permission to sin at free will. That’s not how it works. What it does mean however, is that when we come before God in confession, it puts us in a humble and vulnerable posture that we admit we are not perfect and we all fall short of God’s plan and glory in our lives.

 Through our Old Testament passage from the prophet Isaiah, that we read earlier, we’ve heard the voice of God had been long silenced for the past 400 years. The people of Israel had gone astray with their sinful disobedience. They had distanced themselves from God. They had turned to other gods or other forms of godliness (or godlessness).

 I’m sure it wasn’t easy for Isaiah to be the prophet when the people had seemingly abandoned God. Despite the sinfulness of the people, Isaiah pleaded to God for justice, comfort, and peace, on behalf of the people. They live casual and worldly lives while compromising their faith towards God. Hmm….does that sound familiar? Do you know anyone who’s like that? However, despite Isaiah’s disobedience and infidelity, Isaiah pleaded to God, on behalf of the people for justice, mercy, comfort, and peace, even though the people did not deserve it at all. There were still some who have kept their hopes alive and yearned for the day when the Messiah Savior would come to deliver them out of their bondage. This is the same hope that we must carry out during this season of Advent, as we wait for the coming of the Messiah King.

 Through those “silent” years, God was ready preparing the people’s hearts for the long expected Savior, just as they were during those 40 years wandering out in the wilderness. As Isaiah prophesied ***"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."[[1]](#footnote-1)***

**What valleys must we lift up? What mountains and hills must be made low in our lives today? These are the questions that we must ask ourselves as we prepare our hearts during this Advent season.**

 John’s message of repentance may be a hard message for some to accept. It was hard back then, and it’s probably even harder for many of us today. John didn’t come bearing the Good News. He made that very clear to the people that he was NOT the Messiah. He came bearing the “Bad News” that they need to change. They need to change the way they have been living, the way they have been relating to others. John was telling the people that they must examine themselves, asking those tough questions that they may not feel comfortable answering because they knew they were the ones who needed to be changed. John’s message was an alarming Wake-Up call for the people. Wake-up!!! Before it’s too late.

 Come to think of it, many of us today are also longing and yearning for our Savior to come. We can easily identify the problems of our society, while hypocritically pointing fingers and casting blames on others while neglecting to look ourselves in the mirror. Let us not identify the speck in other’s eyes while we have a log in their own.[[2]](#footnote-2)

 Some may wonder, why can’t Jesus come right now to put an end to all of our miseries, long-suffering and pains. Many of us are bearing the suffering consequences and are consumed by the world of sins and darkness. Everyday we still hear voices of despair crying out in the wilderness, yearning for justice and peace. We too are as guilty and as disobedient of fallen astray from our God. Repentance is needed for all of us today!!

 To be honest, not many of us would like to be told what we’ve been doing is wrong or we are in need of a spiritual awakening and change. We are reluctant to admit our own flaws and failures while claiming to be more righteous than others. We rationalize our state of contentment while refusing to hear what the Spirit might be speaking to us right now.

 Through John, God is offering us the message of hope and peace through our humble repentance. Ultimately we’re the ones who must stand face-to-face and to get it “right” with God. God is willing to reconcile with us through our repentance and the changing of our hearts. All things are like the grass and flower must wither and fade, but the word of our God will stand forever. God’s promise remains steadfast through eternity and can withstand all trials. The prophet Isaiah also reminded us that *God will give power to the faint, and strengthens those who are powerless. (Isaiah 40:29).*

 **Furthermore, this message challenges us to take on a huge step of commitment forward towards faith, rather than fears.**  This is our spiritual “Wake up” call!

 Over the past year, 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. It seems it’s a weekly occurrence when we hear news of violence with massive bloodshed upon one another, whether here in the US or overseas. This is an alarming wake-up call with 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 have an obligation and a charge to “go before the LORD to prepare his ways for the kingdom to come (1:76).  *Give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. God will guide our feet into the way of peace, among God’s people.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

 Throughout this whole season of Advent, we pray that the everlasting Prince of Peace shall come and re-establish His reign upon us once again. ***“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.”[[4]](#footnote-4)***

 **May we be inspired and challenged once again by the “silent voices” that are crying out in the wilderness. God has commissioned us to speak our prophetic voice in this world today through grace and humility. God has given us the boldness and courage to do so.**

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 in this world that seems to be hopeless, 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, those whose family have been separated across borders, and those who have been abused by their spouse both physically, emotionally, and sexually. *The grass withers and the flower fades, but God’s word and God’s hope will stand forever*.[[5]](#footnote-5) Our hope shall set us free!

 Together we shall pray expectedly and patiently through faith that the Messiah may come and reestablish His throne with us once again, as we pray **Come, Lord Jesus Come! Maranatha!**

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

1. *Isaiah 40:3-5* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Matthew 7:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Luke 1:79 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Isaiah 40:1-2 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Isaiah 40:8* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)