

Monday, December 25, 2017 - Day 358 – Zechariah 12, Psalm 141, Luke 3

Full Expectation

On Christmas Day, we must ask ourselves, “How does the Word of God come to us?” Another questions we must ask ourselves, “When the Word of God comes to us, how do we respond?” Do we take the word and speak it, breathe it, live it? Do we have such courage like John the Baptist? Do we have the courage to call a brood of vipers a bride of vipers? Or do we just rationalize that calling out something is a failure in respecting the dignity of the human being? Bob Dylan in his song, *It's All Right Mom*, says, “Even the president of The United States sometimes must have to stand naked.” So John the Baptist exposes the crowd and forces them to stand naked because they are unprepared for the judgement. Perhaps once exposed, the crowd will be willing *to bear fruits worthy of repentance*.

On this Christmas Day are we willing *to bear fruits worthy of repentance* and what are those fruits to look like? We, as a people, especially of America, have an expectation that we will always be in command of our own lives, over the lives of others, and that somehow we are exempt from judgement. However, John is preparing the way of the Lord and we, too, are to prepare the way of the Lord by asking ourselves some tough questions and making ourselves vulnerable before God. We must prepare ourselves to receive God's reign in the coming of Christ. However, the question is, are we willing to do what it takes? Are we willing to cut down our trees that don't bear good fruit, are we willing to make straight the crooked and smooth the way so *all flesh shall see the salvation of God*. Salvation is not something for us to hide under a bushel basket. We must share it and offer the way to others just as John did. We are the John the Baptists of today, preparing the way for Jesus Christ. The people to whom we must share salvation are holding onto their false gods that can't deliver anything except let down. We as Americans look to our political leaders to lead the way to a brighter future, and when was the last time we had a president who truly led us to a brighter future? Not in my life time! People are filled with expectation and they are looking to the wrong gods – the gods of commerce, the gods of celebrity, the gods of sports, the gods of psychology, the gods of science, the gods of nuclear arms. None of these gods can offer salvation for all people. Someone always loses and it's usually the poor, the orphan, the widow and the elderly. We must *turn our eyes toward God* as Psalm 141 states and *seek refuge* in God.

The Good News is that God sent Jesus the Christ, his only begotten son, to take a place among humanity to show us how to prepare for the Day of the Lord. Our faith in Christ establishes us as those who need no other gods but God himself. We can wash ourselves clean of the gods that our culture promotes. We can take our faith full with gratitude and respond by following Jesus Christ, so we can redirect the focus of people following the false gods and persuade even the tax collectors of our day to come and be baptized. *The people are filled with expectation* and we are all questioning in our hearts, “Who will lead the way?” However, the irony of it all is that we don't have to wait for the Good News, through faith we already possess it. However, we must live out the Good

News in our daily lives by knocking walls down, inviting the visitor into our embrace, accepting the refugee and stranger into our midst, by speaking out against the brood of vipers, by feeding those who are hungry for sustenance and healing, and respecting the dignity of every human being. The Good News is that we have a model to follow. We don't need to follow the false god that our culture advances, government establishes, or our advertisers lure over us in print and screen. We have Jesus and if we have Jesus now in our hearts, we will be received by him when he comes again.

By The Rev. Tim Gavin