

Contemplative Advent Service

5 December, 2010

John the Baptist is a smart man, he knows his limits, what he brings and what he cannot. He can plough the field, a vital and necessary practice, but he lacks the seeds for new growth to plant.

John offers a better box
Jesus breaks the mold

John, as a good prophet should, requires ascetic discipline
Jesus delights in the Spirit

John insists we obey a methodology
Jesus invites us to a personal relationship

John demands repentance, turning our lives around
Jesus offers the freedom and gratitude of forgiveness

John sells and tells
Jesus invites and includes

John lives in a world of negatives; all those shalt nots...
Jesus lives his positives

John demands we confess our sins
Jesus tells us that our failures are not stronger than the kindness of God

John says, "Say No to Sin."
Jesus says, "Say Yes to loving others."

John offers true religion.
Jesus brings something better: he gives something beyond religion, he gives us us faith.

John begins it, speaking of our need examine our lives – where we need to change, not for the sake of what reward we might get – whether heaven or happiness – but change for the sake of here and now – confident that Jesus is, how our hope changes and inspires and frees us to live boldly and lovingly today. We need both men. What John begins, Jesus fulfills.

Let do more than talk about Advent, this time of preparation; let us do Advent.

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Let us examine ourselves in light of the teaching of our Lord Christ, as given in the beatitudes [Book of Common Worship, 1946]

**[Ring Bell]**

**Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Leader 1: O Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sakes did become poor that we might be made rich: increase in us the desire for your inestimable gifts of the Spirit; Prevent us from putting our trust in riches. Deliver us from pride in the same. Humble us. Grant us grace so to use your gifts that we may be rich in good works, ready to distribute, and eager to communicate. By the abundant riches of your grace, bring us to your heavenly kingdom. Through the Spirit of the Christ.

**Let us pray silently on the measure of the poverty of our spirit...**

**{Ring Bell}**

**Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.**

Leader 2: Give us O Lord sorrow for our sins, and for the sins of the whole world; that though our sorrow there may be joy in the presence the angels of God. Give us, O Lord, the spirit of your Son, that being well and glad and strong, we may never lack sympathy for those who suffer and are sad. Give us, O Lord, the power when we suffer pain to look into your face, and learn from you to bear it patiently as seeing Him who is invisible, through Jesus Christ who weeps for his people.

**Let us pray silently on the measure of our sorrow...**

**{Ring Bell}**

**Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.**

Leader 1: Teach us, O Lord not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. Help us to overcome the impulses to put ourselves forward at the expense of others. Grant that with self control we may never boast of ourselves, as though we alone had labored without your aid or the help of others. Make us O Lord, eager to learn to be your servants, that we may work the works of your blessed Son may we so delight to do your will that we may find in your service

perfect freedom and fullness of joy. Through Your Son our suffering servant, Jesus Christ.

**Let us pray silently on the measure of our meekness....**

**{Ring Bell}**

**Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they will be filled.**

Leader 2: Give O Lord a reverence for the truth, the desire both to think and to speak truly. Save us from all fear of the truth. Grant us all an appreciation of beauty and whatsoever things are lovely. Increase our reverence for them; make us to see in them a part of your revelation of Yourself, that beauty becomes You no less than truth and righteousness. Quicken in us O Lord the desire to see justice established among all people. Do hasten that day, we beseech you, when love shall prevail in our social and industrial life, when none shall enrich himself or herself at other's expense, nor live indifferent to others needs and rights; through Him who gave himself for us, even Jesus Christ, our only righteousness.

**Let us pray silently on the measure of our hunger and thirst for righteousness...**

**{Ring Bell}**

**Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.**

Leader 1: Help us, O Lord, to look for the good in others and not the evil. Enable us always to understand before we condemn. Make us quick to forgive, knowing how greatly we ourselves stand in need of forgiveness from you and others. Help us, O Lord, to remember how often we do wrong through want of thought rather than from lack of love; and how cunning are the snares that trip our feet. Make us worthy to pray that we may be forgiven in the measure with which we forgive; and finally that we may obtain your mercy; through our Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ.

**Let us pray silently on the measure of our mercy...**

**{Ring Bell}**

**Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.**

Leader 2: O Most holy God, teach us to reverend our bodies as temples of the Holy spirit; and grant that we may never be satisfied with any standard of personal purity lower than your own. Grant, O Lord, that we may think clean, generous, humble thoughts, and harbor none that stains the mind, pollutes our tongues, perverts caring touch, brings noise instead of clarity, or dims our vision of You. So cleanse our hearts that we may be clean, and ever behold you face to face; through Jesus Christ who is the head of we who are the body.

**Let us pray silently on the measure of our pure hearts...**

**{Ring Bell}**

**Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.**

Leader 1: Keep our hearts, o Lord, ever open unto You, that being constantly renewed by your grace, amid all the perils and dangers, the restlessness and complexity of our day, we may at all times possess the peace of those whose minds are stayed on You. Help us to walk as children of the light. Keep us, O Lord, from straining and embittering our earthly relationships, and grant us, we beseech you, a courteous and forbearing spirit, that so we may be makers of peace; through Him who so loved us, even the Peace of Peace.

**Let us pray silently on the measure of our peacemaking....**

**{Ring Bell}**

Leader 2: Where we have offended our Lord, stained purity, failed, betrayed our holy calling as Christ's people, forgive us. May we begin this new church year as forgiven people, ready for the coming of the Lord, living as those whose lives are not their own but are bought with a price.