

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

December 15, 2024



REPENT

uncovering the hope in change

by Drew Downs

The image of hundreds of people going out into the wilderness to hear a prophet tell them they need to change their ways feels both obvious and absurd. How often do we hear that people hate change, for instance? And yet, how often do we hear people of faith talk about their own sinfulness and that we all need to be redeemed by Christ? The idea that we are in need of change and also that we are allowed, by some force of nature to resist it, is a delightful paradox.

And yet, we rarely struggle with seeing our need to change in New Year's resolutions, for example. We all could lose some weight or cut back on some vice or more fully embrace a beloved virtue. In a sense, recognizing the need to change is the easier part. Seeing that we actually can change is the bigger part. There are methods that can help us make our changes stick. But the real hump to get over is seeing this necessary change as possible. And good for us.

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WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Reunification Conversation

A couple of years ago now, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Northern Indiana initiated a conversation about reunifying with the Diocese of Indianapolis after more than a century as separate dioceses. This is a fascinating idea, and one with more than a few moving parts to arrange.

Over that time, our bishops and Standing Committees gathered, set up a joint task force to facilitate the conversation, and established a framework for moving forward. That work has been significant and has so far involved the participation of hundreds of Episcopalians in Indiana

As part of the ongoing work of discernment, we are called to have a local conversation within the congregation and report to the task force by early January. While this isn't a lot of time for us, the task force's timeline is packed between now and next fall.

Please join us this Sunday, **December 15th** at **11:30 am** for our conversation.

Please visit www.episcopalindiana.org for more information about the reunification process, including the timeline.

You are also welcome to look at the materials we will be covering at:
<https://www.episcopalindiana.org/resources/parish-engagement-packet>

With love,
Drew

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FOR SUNDAY

Advent 3C

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Collect

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

Luke 3:7-18

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by

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saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

Reflection

Reading about John the Baptist in Advent, as people are preparing for Christmas, is an odd experience. It isn't a juxtaposition exactly, but it is certainly a competing vibe.

People are flocking to John because his message of repentance strikes the masses as needed. They want to change their lives. And the reason is both something personal and common. Each of these people feels the need to change themselves and they know the world needs to change. They hear John's message as essential.

What is at stake for them (and for us) is our delicate relationship to that truth. We know we need to change and yet so many of us hate hearing someone tell us why and how. It feels personal, like an insult, like going to the doctor knowing you could stand to lose some weight and then having them tell you that.

When the people ask John what they need to do, he tells them to be generous and not to exploit other people. These are complimentary messages that are for everyone, but have greater impact the more wealth they have, the more wealth is built on the backs of others.

Generosity is an easy message this time of year. But a refusal to be selfish, to deny others of protection: clothes, homes, food, water: to profit off of another's poverty: that's a message that is never easy to hear. Both are essential, however; necessary. And the more we have the greater the obligation to give.

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