

**The 2nd Sunday of Advent (C)
Luke 3:1-6**

Last Sunday we began our Advent journey.

Our gospel lesson from St. Luke today,

introduces us to a familiar person

in the Advent season, John the Baptist.

If we notice the way Luke frames this narrative,

we will find all that we need

for our own Advent journeys,

as we await the coming of our Lord.

So let's take a look at how

St. Luke, places his story of John the Baptist

within human history.

First off he dates John's ministry

as 15 years into the reign of the Roman Emperor Tiberius,

Pilate's governorship in Jerusalem,

King Herod's reign in Judea and his brother's in (E two rea)

and the High Priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.

So, what do you suppose St. Luke is signaling to his readers by his precise historical accounting?

There are probably several things.

First of all, Luke may be wanting to anchor

this story of Jesus and the early Church,

and his book of Acts,

in the real and recent history of his readers back then,

in order to assure them that he was not spinning a yarn

a fable or myth, but he's telling them about

real people and real events

that happened in their verifiable recent history.

Second, he might be hinting that although the headlines

are usually made by important political and religious figures,

the real story that changes history

is happening away from the glitz and glamour

of famous hallways in the palace and the Temple.

They are under the radar of the world's attention.

It's an ironic setting Luke is setting up here.

And finally, Luke might be telling us

that these important political and religious figures,

whose lives seemed so distant and removed

from the simple beginning of his story

in the wilderness surrounding the Jordan River Valley,

intersecting the story of John the Baptist, Jesus and the early Church

in graphic and often disastrous ways.

King Herod would ultimately put John to death,

after jailing him over his very public denunciation

of Herod's illicit union with the wife of his brother Phillip.

Caiaphas would convene a "kangaroo court,"

that accused Jesus of heresy,

and Pilate would cave and condemn our Lord to the cross.

And ultimately it will be a Roman emperor

who would seal the fate of the Apostle Paul

as the Book of Acts concludes.

Also notice how Luke paints the story of John the Baptist with brushstrokes reminiscent of the Old Testament Prophets, especially Elijah, Isaiah and Malachi.

Luke tells us that John's ministry is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of one crying out in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord.

John's physical appearance recalls the way Elijah is described in the Book of Kings, rough and rugged, living in the wilderness, and calling down powerful kings in the name of the Lord.

And let's not forget Malachi in John's preaching either.

Malachi ends the Old Testament with a scathing word of judgment on the rulers and priests of his day, calling them to repent and prepare for the coming of the day of the Lord.

**But 4 hundred years have passed since Malachi,
and now in John the Baptist many people
thought they were seeing the promised coming of Malachi
who would herald of God's new reign.**

**In a sense John the Baptist links the Old and New Testaments,
he is the bridge between the two.**

**He is the embodiment of the Old Testament prophets,
but he also ushers in the ministry of Jesus,
and the story of our Lord's Church.**