

“Prepare the Way of the Lord”

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Luke 3:1-6*

In a “Peanuts” cartoon strip, good old Charlie Brown says to Linus, “Life is just too much for me. I’ve been confused from the day I was born. I think the whole trouble is that we’re thrown into life too fast. We’re not really prepared.” Linus asks, “What did you want...a chance to warm up first?” The Advent season is supposed to be our chance to warm up.

Advent – the arrival! Waiting for the Arrival. And as we wait, we are to prepare, to be prepared. Really, we humans are always preparing, preparing for something.

This morning, let's just muse on the plethora of instances where each of us must prepare. Almost everything in our lives takes preparation. We often prepare without even naming the preparation. You had to prepare to come to church this morning.

Life is made up of a myriad of preparations. Grade school prepared us for high School. High School for further education, whether academic or hands on experiences.

I can still remember the day of my graduation from Grove City College. There I was, standing in the parking lot with Shawn. We were both celebrating this event. But, at one point I said to Shawn, “only three more years to go”. The preparation for becoming a minister of the Presbyterian Church was continuing. Three more years of preparation were ahead of us. From hindsight, the years of preparation have flown by.

Consider the preparation you have participated in throughout your life.
Consider the preparation it takes to reach certain goals.

According to one college, if you want to prepare to become a nurse you will need to have completed one year of high school chemistry, biology and mathematics, Your SAT scores need to be at least 800 and have a high school average of 80 better. You will also need to satisfactorily complete 126 college credits. If you are considering a fulfilling career in nursing-prepare!

If you want to become a Medical Doctor, make sure you prepare. Start in high school, if not earlier. Get used to studying and studying and studying. Add several years on to your academic career. Prepare-for your life!

Perhaps you love cooking. The Culinary Institute of America will help prepare you in becoming a great chef. In thirty-eight months you will receive a Bachelor of Professional Studies.

Preparation in life is a necessity and integral to our lives. From the mundane, to concerns of life fulfillment and security.

Prepare!

This morning's Advent text testifies to the immense importance of preparation. The gospel writer begins his Good News by quoting from an ancient writing of several hundred years earlier. You see, preparing is nothing new. It is part and parcel of the human situation. The prophet Isaiah, hundreds of years earlier has a messenger crying out to his disposed people, "prepare the way of God, straighten out the road, which leads back to the sacred land, to Jerusalem."

You see, at that time the people of Israel, the Jews, were aliens in a strange land. They had been ripped out of their own homes, terrorized and enslaved. As they languished in this foreign land, Isaiah screams out to them, as they sat around with their long faces, their same-old, same-old mentality, their "we've been living like this for generations and we will always live in this alienation".

Isaiah desperately wants to get their attention, for he knows "something" is in the air. The times they are a-changing. They are going to be able to return to their homes!

So too is John the Baptist, excited about great changes soon to occur, hundreds of years later. This people too (not surprisingly) we're stuck in the same-old, same-old. Life never changes. "I was unfulfilled today, yesterday, the day before that, and the day before that and the day before that and (you get the picture), and I will be unfulfilled tomorrow!

But, prophets, visionaries, just won't allow lethargic people to always take a pass on life. By no means! Thank God for prophets, agitators, irritators!

Thank God for the Isaiah's and John the Baptists! Caution-there are few of them around. They are lone voices, crying out in a vast wasteland, wilderness of non-expectation. And how we need the shouts – Prepare! Prepare!

That, by the way is where many of us live. In the land of non-expectations and sure enough almost nothing ever happens. You get what you don't expect, nothing no change.

But Isaiah and John will have none of it! Screaming at the top of their lungs, in the vastness of empty expectations, they are declaring, they are insisting, "You, you, you, you, get ready! Prepare! Straighten out the crooked unrepaired roads in your life that have not been used for so long. Prepare. Fix them for the journey of your life!

Change is possible!

Its about to overtake you! Don't miss it! Get Ready! Prepare! !

Of course, we as Christians focus this wondrous change in and through the birth of the Christ Child. It is no accident that the newness, this opportunity to change the same-old, same-old of our lives is positioned in the birth of a baby!

New life! Novelty! Change! Future! Hope!

Do you get it?

From generation to generation, the populace falls into the rut of "ho-hum", "what's the difference?" and a voice cries out, from deep within your soul, "life can be different! Get involved in life! Today doesn't have to be yesterday!"

So prepare, open you heart, your soul, your mind, your spirit to the possibilities of the wonders and challenges that tomorrow holds. Preparation means expectation! Prepare! Risk yourself! Step outside the prescribed line. Dare to prepare for changes yet unknown!

This gets exciting! (Yes, even for Presbyterians!)

Advent is a reminder for all of us who stop preparing for the new, the novel, the possibilities that life offers. No expectations.

Wake Up!

Be Alert!

Prepare!

Prepare for a life, “your life” filled with unknown and challenging possibilities!

Prepare! Prepare the Way of the Lord!

Amen.