

Jeff's Jottings

In hearing the Word ourselves ...

December 9, 2019

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I heard someone say this week that it's been an especially gloomy fall.

He was commenting on our cloudy autumn weather in Minnesota. Others may have heard that phrase and thought of other things.

Have you wondered how people heard the direct, some might say harsh, words of John the Baptist. Yes, it was clear that "you brood of vipers" was directed at one particular group of people, the Pharisees. But John's prophetic preaching left few unchallenged. He was a gloomy guy. And yet, the text tells us, the people flocked to hear John, and responded to his preaching.

[This week's Art and Faith at Advent](#), part of my Advent discipline that I am inviting you to share each week, focuses on John the Baptist, and a remarkable painting by Mattia Petri. I resonated with the closing words of the devotion, both as a possible insight into John's influence long ago and as a challenge to my own Advent practice today. *This Second Sunday of Advent, we do not simply hear about the prophet John; in hearing the Word ourselves, we are called to live prophetically and to prepare the way all around us.*

In hearing the Word ourselves, we are called ... May that invitation be as real for all of us in our Advent journey this week as it seemed to be to those who flocked to hear John in the wilderness.