

**December 8, 2019**  
**Second Sunday of Advent**

**Be Still... Then Prophecy**

**Ancient Reading** ~ *Matthew 3:1-12*

At this time John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Change your hearts and minds, for the reign of heaven is about to break in upon you!" It was John that the prophet Isaiah described when he said: "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of our God, Make straight the paths of God!'"

John was clothed in a garment of camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist. Locusts and wild honey were his food. At that time, Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him. John baptized them in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

When he saw that many of the Pharisees and Sadducees were coming to be baptized, John said to them, "You pack of snakes! Who told you to flee from the coming wrath? Give some evidence that you mean to reform! And don't pride yourselves on the claim, 'Sarah and Abraham are our parents.' I tell you, God can raise children for Sarah and Abraham from these very stones!

"Even now the ax is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree that is not fruitful will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I will baptize you in water if you have a change of heart, but the One who will follow me is more powerful than I. I'm not even fit to untie the sandals of the Coming One! That One will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire, whose winnowing-fan will clear the threshing floor. The grain will be gathered into the barn, but the chaff will be burned in unquenchable fire."

**Second Reading**

~ from *"In God's Time"* by Dr. Craig C. Hill

It is important to observe that biblical prophecy as a whole is more concerned with influencing the present than with revealing the future....When the great Hebrew prophets did foretell the future, often as not it was to *prevent* some impending disaster. "Here is what things will look like if you do not straighten up." Such prophecy called the nation to repentance, warning the people of Israel not to take God's favor for granted. Their future was not inevitable; it was conditional.

**Third Reading**

~ from *"The Prelude"* in *The Complete Works of William Wordsworth*

When from our better selves we have too long  
Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,  
Sick of its business, of its pleasure tired,  
How gracious, how benign, is Solitude.