



The Shepherd's Voice

December 4, 2012

By Fr. Joe Rees

“Straight Path”

“As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.’” Luke 3: 4

Advent. To go before. Before His Coming. Coming? Who is coming? Isaiah the prophet of the Lord was re-telling the Spirit of God's message...God will be coming to His people! The voice in the wilderness would be John, the Baptist. But, it's still the Voice of the Spirit. His heralding witness was/is to “repent, now, before the Lord comes!” We are to humble ourselves in this season of preparation and reflect upon those aspects of our lives that are incongruous with the way and will of the Lord God. Are we making His paths straight?

What path are you on right now? Is it a path to amplify ‘self’? The Lord calls us to *change the way we think* (repent) about what our lives are for and who we really need to please. I ask myself those questions every day. Am I really on the path that the Lord wants me to be on?

I remember as a boy growing up on Long Island, New York, we had a deep, wooded swath behind our house. As a young guy I would climb trees and make platforms of boards to spy out who might be coming down the path, you know, pirates or enemies or the like. The tree fort was deep in the woods (where mom couldn't find me). The path had been trampled down over time and would connect to different paths that would lead over to a golf course (St. George's in Setauket). My brothers and I use to take my dad's golf clubs over and when no one was on the first hole we'd chip and putt 'til it was dark. Somehow we knew how to get back on the right path to lead us home. From the tree fort during the day we could see all those paths converge or depart to different areas. But, down on

the path in the darkening evening, we'd sometimes have to rely on an imprinted pattern of ‘right’ turns. We weren't always so lucky. We'd sometimes take a wrong turn and we'd spend another agonizing number of minutes trying to find another path to lead us back on track. We'd keep searching for the warm glow we'd eventually see of our kitchen window and mom looking out for us. Always felt real good to finally get home! Dinner would be on! And, we'd be hungry!

Jesus sets a path for us to follow. His Spirit has a vantage point above and beyond us to guide us to ‘right’ paths. If we are in His Spirit and communing with Jesus on a daily basis we'll have that ‘imprinted’ pattern that knows what turn to make when confronted with the challenges of the journey of life. He'll whisper to us to turn here, the path is straight. Or He'll say to us when we've gone down one of those dead ends, “HERE I AM, walk with me,” back-tracking to the place where we went astray, and “I'll lead you home.” Often it is in that dead end that fear is most gripping; the path simply runs out, the trees are thick, the underbrush biting at our legs, we've no where else to turn. Then, when the world and her ways have let us down, we are ready to hear those words “the crooked shall become straight, the rough places become level, and I'll see the Savior on the path ~ if I just turn around!

Jesus holds out His hands in love to every one of us who have been there, done that, and regret in our hearts with painful memory, the path we have chosen that led us to despairing. He looks into each of our hearts and says “Come home, dinner is waiting.”

Jesus is my Light upon the dark paths of this world. When I hear His Voice and follow His leading, I'm on the straight path that leads me home. It's where I really want to be. With Jesus, that is. I want to

walk on the path He shows me, tells me to turn right there, and left there, and follow the long straight portion that faithfully leads me to the warm, restoring, hunger-satisfying joy of heaven. Jesus will lead you home, my friend, and you won't be afraid of life's paths anymore. Trust His guidance and the compass of His Word. You will be comforted, strengthened, and helped along the path that leads to "seeing the salvation of our God." Now, I look for those straight paths of the way of Jesus! We walk with Him instead of those off-course paths that seem intriguing to venture into because of the 'unknown' paths (promising glitter, gorging, or glory) that deceitfully scintillate the senses. I don't want to have to walk down any path in the darkness that requires me to rely on my own imprinting of what may be right or good. No, I want the Light of Christ upon my path, to walk in His Way, and receive the crown of life at my homecoming!

take too long to find the right Way on your own. And you can't. You and I need Jesus...because He is the Way! We just never know when our time is up!

Won't it be wonderful to arrive on Christmas morning this year with that satisfaction of realizing that the path we have followed by His Spirit led us home?! We will enjoy the delight of knowing we were led to the crib of Jesus, whereupon we give Him the greatest gift we could ever give, for leading us back on His straight path ~ our hearts of love for Him.

Looking forward to worshipping our Lord Jesus at Christmas with all of you; the folks who follow the straight path of Jesus!

Advent Blessings,
Fr. Joe

Advent teaches us to get back on the right and straight path. Do not delay! Do it now! It may

Sunday Servers this week...

December 9, 2012	2nd Advent	8:00 a.m. Service	10:15 a.m. Service
First Reader	Isaiah 40:1-11	David Green	Stephen Painter
Psalm Reader	Psalm 126	Jerry Brown	Jim Livingston
Second Reader	Philippians 1:1-11	Pam Theobald	Pat Seelig
Intercessors		Joy Rosendale	Mitch Dubski
Lay Euch. Ministers		John & Myrna Lipnicke	Carolyn Blumberg, Jackie Lansing
Acolytes		Joy Rosendale	Mitch D (C); Damon W (T1); Dasiahmarie V (T2)
Welcomers		Chris Corey	Anna Teixeira
Ushers		Chris Corey, David Green	Dink Nash, Ted Vallas, JR Fox, Jim Livingston
Vestry Person of Day	Jackie Lansing		
Healing Ministers		Jane Rost, Rudy Theobald	Kari Campbell, Donna Sandner
Announcer		Myrna Lipnicke	Joy Rosendale

Advent Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 9 at 7:30 p.m.

Join us as we read Bible lessons and sing the music that leads us into the celebration of the birth of Christ.

Family Christmas Play

December 16 at the
10:15 a.m. service

Christmas Services

Christmas Eve – 5:00 p.m. – Family Service
10:00 p.m. – Traditional Service
Christmas Day – 10:00 a.m.

Soaking Prayer - Wednesday, December 12 - 6:30 p.m.

Sunday at Grace

8:00 a.m. – Traditional service
with Choir
9:30 a.m. – Coffee & Adult Forum
10:00 a.m. – Nursery opens
10:15 a.m. – Family Service
With Worship Team
10:15 a.m. – Children's Church

No special Second Sunday in December. There will be 2 services on December 9th and the regular coffee hour between services. There will be one service at 9:00 a.m. on December 23rd and December 30th.

Readings for Sunday

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalms 126

Philippians 1:1-11

Luke 3:1-6

We are using the English Standard Version of the Bible and the Lectionary from the Book of Common Prayer (Year C)

This Week at Grace –Dec. 4, -Dec. 11, 2012

Tues. December 4

11:30 a.m. Rector's Bible Study – Isaiah
4:30 p.m. Healing Eucharist at the Oasis
6:30 p.m. Potluck Fellowship Dinner
7:15 p.m. "Christianity Explored"

Wed December 5

8:30 a.m. Morning Prayer & Eucharist
9:30 a.m. Staff Meeting
No Wed. evening Healing Prayer until further notice.
6:30 p.m. Youth Group

Thurs. December 6

7:00 a.m. Bible Study
11:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist at the Oasis
3:30 p.m. Alpha Club
7:00 p.m. Choir

Fri. December 7

6:30 p.m. Evening Prayer & Eucharist at Grace

Sat. December 8

8:00 a.m. Men's Bible Study
10:30 a.m. Prayers & Squares Brunch – off site.
1:00 p.m. Rehearsal for Children's Program

Sun. December 9

Second Sunday of Advent

8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Choir
9:30 a.m. Coffee & Adult Forum – Suite T
The Great Divorce by C.S. Lewis
10:00 a.m. Nursery opens
10:15 a.m. Family Service with Worship Team
10:15 a.m. Children's Church
7:30 p.m. Advent Lessons & Carols

Mon. December 10

6:30 a.m. Men's Prayer

Tues. December 11

11:30 a.m. Rector's Bible Study at Grace
4:30 p.m. Healing Service at CHC
6:30 p.m. Potluck Fellowship Dinner at Grace
7:15 p.m. Teaching – "Christianity Explored"

Rector's Bible Study

Tuesdays

11:30 a.m.

Fr. Joe is leading the group through a study of the Book of Isaiah. Everyone is welcome.
B.Y.O.L. (Bring your own lunch)

**Wednesdays at 8:30 a.m.
Morning Prayer At Grace Anglican
All are welcome to attend.**

Weekly – There are over 25 small groups meeting during the week. Check our newsletter for a list of all the groups or you can find the list on our website: www.graceanglicanchurch.com.

Save the date!

Dec. 9 Second Sunday - Two services this month
Dec. 9 Advent Lessons & Carols – 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12 Soaking Prayer
Dec. 16 Special Family Christmas Play – 10:15 a.m.
Dec. 23 One Service at 9:00 a.m.
Dec. 24 Services at 5 and 10 p.m.
Dec. 25 Service at 10:00 a.m.
Dec. 30 One Service at 9:00 a.m.
Dec. 31 New Year's Eve Service at 7:00 p.m.
Jan. 27 All Parish Annual Meeting
Feb. 16&17 Bishop Bill at Grace
May 3 Anglican Men's Retreat at Forest Home