



# The Shepherd's Voice

by Fr. Richard Bowman

December 10, 2013

*"Blessed is the one who is not offended by Me."* – Matthew 11:6

John the Baptist has been imprisoned by King Herod. John has spent his life doing what he was appointed to do: preach repentance and baptize in preparation for the coming of Christ, who is also John's cousin. Now, languishing in prison, John begins to doubt whether Jesus is actually the Christ. Sending messengers to Jesus to ask the Lord that crucial question, they return to John with the answer that he, as a prophet steeped in Scripture, would understand: *"the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them."* Isaiah 35:5-6 and Isaiah 61:1. Jesus tells the messengers: *"Go and tell John what you hear and see. . ."*(verse 4)

Then comes "our" verse quoted above: *"Blessed is the one who is not offended by Me."* What do you suppose Jesus means by that?

John's question of doubt is answered by the solid foundation of evidence: Jesus is the Messiah for whom John has been preparing the crowds because He is seen doing the very things Scripture prophesied He would be found doing. Look and see. But besides those things, John is looking for a ruler who will defeat the Roman beast and restore Israel and Judah to its own rule under the Christ. Jesus is not found doing that – not yet. Hence, John's doubt, made worse by his imprisonment and probable execution. Has John wasted his life preparing people for the "wrong Messiah"? Jesus says, "No, John. I am He. Look what I am doing and look at your Bible. Do not doubt, but believe."

John could well have "been offended" or "fallen away" because Jesus did not entirely do what he expected the Messiah to do. In John's mind it was to all happen at once. Isaiah – writing 700 years before Christ – did not understand that there would be two Comings of the Christ. The Jews were not at all convinced of Jesus' Messiahship for this very same reason: why isn't He ridding us of the Romans and sitting on the throne to rule Israel?

Fast-Forwarding to our lives now, let's ask the question: How can we be offended by Jesus, the Messiah? Have you ever sat by the bed of a dying loved one who was not healed even though you and a hundred others prayed to Jesus the Healer for just that to happen? Have you ever suffered through a painful relationship with someone, praying for healing and recovery to the Lord of compassion and who makes all things new – only to find the pain and possibly estrangement only got worse? Have you ever prayed to the "God who provides" for your home to not be taken away, for you to keep your present job, or find a job, to have enough money to put food on the table – and only seen things get worse? And you have cried out in some way: "Where is God?!" At such times – and they come to all of us – we are tempted to be "offended" by Jesus, to find Him a stumbling block.

The answer is the same as the one Jesus sent back to John: Look at the works of the Lord in your life around you and in your life already. Are they clearly signs of the Messiah at work? Has He always given us our daily bread, grace for the moment, for the hour, for the day? Looking back at past crises in our lives – how did the Lord take care of us and resolve them? Or did we turn away from Him and were "offended" at Him, finding Him to be a "stumbling

block"? It helps to look back at earlier situations and learn from them, grow from them. Jesus did not miraculously send angels to release John from Herod's prison. He gave Him reason for faith, based upon what John already saw and heard. This is how He works in our lives also.

May the Lord Jesus continue to bless you and help you grow in Him this Advent.  
 Love and prayers,  
 Fr. Richard

**Sunday Servers**

December 15, 2013	Advent 3	8:30 a.m. Service	10:15 a.m. Service
First Reader	Isaiah 35:1-10	Alfred Focke	Jim Livingston
Psalm Reader	Psalm 146	Jane Rost	Ann Fox
Second Reader	James 5:7-10	Kay Focke	Pat Richardson
Intercessor		Josiah Gilman	Mitch Dubski
Lay Euch. Ministers		Doug Hall, Trish Stewart	Jani Dubski, Richard Rieder
Acolytes		Joshiah Gilman	Mitch D (C ); Zachary J (T1); Damon W (T2)
Welcomers		Myrna Lipnicke, Paula Sholly	Margaret Olsen, Paula Sholly
Ushers		David Green, Dick Sholly	JR Fox, Ray Seibold, Jim Livingston
Vestry Person of Day	Mitch Dubski		
Healing Ministers		Jan Simon, Thor Strom	John & Liz Gerhart
Announcer		Kay Focke	Jani Dubski
Counters			Cline Handy & Michael Murphy

**CHRISTIAN DISCERNMENT**

Beginning on Tuesday, January 7 and running through Tuesday, February 18 from 7-8:30 pm, Larry Warner, Author of "Journey with Jesus", will be teaching on the topic of Christian Discernment. As we mature in Christ we realize that the world is not black and white but very nuanced and thus the role of discernment becomes a critical skill for those who would whole-heartedly follow Christ in the world. This study is designed to help those attending to learn, understand and incorporate key principles and practices for making good God honoring decisions in order to live lives of freedom to be and become who God has created us to be while bringing greater praise and glory to God. This is a life changing series.

**Traditions of Advent Around the World**

Join with the John & Myrna Lipnicke, Dick & Paula Sholly, Dick & Linnie Phelps, and Richard & Edelgard Rieder as they share their experiences of Advent and Christmas in other countries on December 10th.

Donna Brayton will share her beautiful story of Christmas in England on December 17th. Potluck dinner will be at 6:30 p.m. and there will be a special Advent dish to represent the country being presented by the team. Bring a dish to share and join them in this special time of the beauty of the season in other parts of the world.

## **This Week at Grace**

**December 10, 2013-December 17, 2013**

### **Tues. December 10**

- 11:30 a.m. Rector's Bible Study  
4:30 p.m. Healing prayer and Eucharist at CHC  
7:00 p.m. Advent & Christmas Traditions from  
Around the World.

### **Wed. December 11**

- 8:30 a.m. Morning Prayer & Eucharist  
9:30 a.m. No Staff Meeting  
6:30 p.m. Soaking Prayer

### **Thurs. December 12**

- 7:00 a.m. Bible Study  
11:30 a.m. Holy Communion—CHC  
7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

### **Fri. December 13**

- 10:00 a.m. Morning Prayer at CHC  
6:30 p.m. Evening Prayer & Healing

### **Sat. December 14**

- 8:00 a.m. Men's Fellowship  
9:30 a.m. Prayers & Squares - Christmas  
Brunch—off site.  
10:00 p.m. Praise Team rehearsal

### **Sun. December 15**

#### **3rd Sunday of Advent**

- 7:30 a.m. Spoken Eucharist Service  
8:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist with choir  
9:45 a.m. Coffee & Fellowship  
10:00 a.m. Nursery opens  
10:15 a.m. Children's Church  
10:15 a.m. Holy Eucharist with praise team

### **Mon. December 16**

- 6:30 a.m. Men's Prayer

### **Tues. December 17**

- 11:30 a.m. Rector's Bible Study  
4:30 p.m. Healing prayer and Eucharist at CHC  
6:30 p.m.- Potluck Dinner and  
Traditions of Advent & Christmas  
around the world

## **Bible Readings this Week**

Isaiah 35:1-10

Psalms 146

James 5:7-10

Matthew 11:2-11

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

## **Upcoming Events**

- Dec. 10 Traditions of Advent & potluck  
Dec. 15 Angel Tree Party—2:00pm  
Dec. 17 Traditions of Advent & Potluck  
Dec. 22 Children's Christmas program & Party  
Dec. 24 Christmas Eve services—5 & 10 pm  
Dec. 25 Christmas Day service—10:00am  
Dec. 25-Jan 2—Office closed. The staff will check messages and emails if you need to contact the church.

## **Angel Tree Ministry**

We will have a party for the children as they come to pick up their gifts on December 15th. Your financial help with the party is needed. See Tina Murphy for more information.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the big picture project last week. Thank you to Jane Rost for organizing the event. We will have a brand new picture directory coming to each of us. There is still some work to be done on it before it's ready. Your photos that you ordered should be mailed to you before Christmas. If you have pictures of church events taken during 2013, please email them or bring them in to the office on a CD or a camera memory card or on paper to be scanned. We want to include some of these pictures in the new directory and the rest will be archived.

**Grace Anglican Church**

**760-730-9900**

**[www.graceanglicanchurch.com](http://www.graceanglicanchurch.com)**