

CCMC Weekly 54
December 8, 2016

Dear Christ Community,

Old Man Winter has finally blown into Chicagoland in full force. Stay warm, everyone! I was delighted to open my front door to snow last week, although I know it can certainly add time and hazards to our morning routines. There's just nothing like it. When I was a child on the playground and it snowed, at recess, people began rolling snowballs on the ground. Now obviously snowball fighting was forbidden, but there was nothing wrong with rolling up a big ball, like you would for the bottom of a snowman. But the thing is that they never made a snowman. They would roll the ball bigger and bigger and bigger, until it was taller than all the children, until it took seven or ten of them to keep pushing the giant snowball. There was something special in this activity, something about the kids working together towards no particular goal but just to make the biggest snowball possible. There was sacred winter magic in it. When the snow would finally melt, the giant snowballs would linger longest, slowly melting into the frozen mud. May your strength and faith be the things that linger longest, while anything insignificant melts away.

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LAST SUNDAY

We studied Isaiah 11:1-10 (read it here:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2011:1-10>). As we focused on the image of a stump, we reflected on the ways that new things come out of the old, or old things can be repurposed in light of new developments. I talked about a creatively carved stump from my childhood, which was once a tree that provided base as a part of the play life of children of the church, how it remained a central hub in the church lawn. Isaiah too, strong tree that he is, became somehow new when the light of Christ shined on this passage and breathed new life into an already spectacular thing.

At this grey time of year, we remember some of the things that have been fractured from our lives, the poignance of deceased or estranged loved ones being so distant, the loneliness that infringes. Yet Christ comes anew at this time of year, reminding us of our hope through faith, helping us to envision the incredible love and harmony that is the kingdom of God. This scripture isn't here to tease us, but to reveal to us what we can have with God and that we may gain a foretaste of all that through Christ's entry into the world.

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NEXT SUNDAY

Matthew 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 2 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” 3 This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

4 Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, 6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit worthy of repentance. 9 Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 “I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

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STUDY QUESTIONS

- What is your relationship with repentance?
- What kind of guy is John the Baptist? What do you think drew people to him despite his eccentricity?
- What kind of critiques does John make about the people?
- What does John foretell about the coming of Christ?

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Also remember that the Christmas program for the Big Barn Preschool is on Friday evening at 6pm. If you would like to connect more with those who share our building, please come and bring something for the potluck that follows the short program. Peace and joy to you as the season of advent continues to usher in the holidays.

Love, Amy

