

## **Saint Timothy Lutheran – Edmonds, WA**

Wednesday, December 9, 2009 – Advent II

Rev. Craig A. Patterson (Based upon a sermon series by the Rev. Dr. Donald F. Hinchey)

### **“On Your Knees.”**

(Text: Mark 1:4)

**Context:** Mark begins his gospel account with a description of the ministry of John the Baptist as given by the prophet Isaiah. God sent John, the cousin of Jesus, ahead of Jesus in order to call people to repentance in preparation for the arrival of the Son of God, the promised Messiah. John called people to repent of their sins. True sorrow over one’s sins and an awareness of the need for a Savior are necessary preparations for any person to benefit from the coming of the Savior. John calls people to fall ‘on their knees.’

#### **I. People In John’s Day and Today Seek Peace and Joy Without Going Through The Process of Repentance.**

- A. The topic of repentance is put off for another time.
  - 1. How can sins be forgiven if they do not exist in the mind of the one who has sinned? Are there any people who have not sinned?
  - 2. The Bible declares, “for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:22-23).
- B. The messenger (s) of repentance are seen as mere “killjoys.”
  - 1. Yet, nonetheless, John persists with his call to “repent!” He will not let people, nor will God, off the hook.
    - a. Forgiveness of sins comes to individuals who have fallen first on their knees in repentance of the sins they have committed.
- C. Today, with such an emphasis on the days before Christmas being filled with joy, many collapse under the weight of this expectation and the realization of how far their lives are from being joyful.
  - 1. “The great irony of course is that while backs are being slapped and cheer is being drunk, lives are being lost as well. Christmas, we recall, is a prime time for suicides, as the command to be merry sounds for some like an unattainable demand. The sadness within people can be amplified by the season’s expectation to be merry” (Dr. Hinchey, pp. 12-13).

#### **II. God’s Spirit Leads Sinners To Repent And To Believe In Jesus For Forgiveness.**

- A. Despite the odds, the Spirit of God works in people’s hearts (then and now) through John’s call to repentance and the proclamation of the Good News.
- B. We are led by the Spirit through a three-step Advent repentance process (suggests Dr. Hinchey):
  - 1. Instead of just packing away our normal, usual sins (like we do our Christmas ornaments) from year to year, we take inventory by unpacking and examining our individual sins.
    - a. Often these include such normal companions as pride, insensitivity, jealousy, anger, and resentment.
    - b. “An honest inventory helps us to take honest stock of ourselves and clean house” (Dr. Hinchey).
  - 2. Secondly, (this is the hardest part) we surrender those sinful aspects of ourselves to God who can heal, restore, rescue, and redeem.
    - a. It’s not even our surrendering, but rather God carrying our sins that pours new life and joy into our souls. (He bore our sins.)
  - 3. Finally, we accept who we are in Christ into the new year, repenting and believing as our daily practice. (Joyful as our sins are forgiven.)