

**Advent 2C.18;** Baruch 5:1-9; Phil 1:4-11; Luke 3:1-6; *A Homecoming Event*

It's that time of the year and it's been cold!!! *Brrr!* Perhaps you recall this event. On *October 4, 1943*, *Bing Crosby* recorded the song under the title "*I'll Be Home for Christmas (If Only in My Dreams)*", with the John Scott Trotter Orchestra for Decca Records as a 78 rpm single. Within a month of release, the song charted for 11 weeks, with a peak at number three. The next year, the song reached number 16 on the charts and has warmed the hearts of millions ever since.

### **Why I wonder?**

Perhaps an *ancient call* is echoing down the ages into our own hearts?

**Baruch calls out from the scriptures, “Up, Jerusalem! stand upon the heights; look to the east and see your children gathered from the east and the west.... Led away on foot by their enemies they left you: but God will bring them back**

**... to you borne aloft in glory as on royal thrones.”** Baruch 5:5-6

**Beyond belief, the Exiles are finally coming HOME from Babylon!**

In the gospel, *John the Baptist* takes up *Isaiah's* prophetic call: “**Prepare the way of the Lord.**” Still quoting, John urges us to clear away all the stumbling blocks that might make God's road difficult. **Why?**

**Can't God handle a few curves in the road, or a mountain or two?**

Changing the geography seems to be not for God's sake but for the sake of the Redeemer's followers. And what unlikely followers they are!

John promises that we, too, will see “**the salvation of God.**”

**Baruch puts human faces on “the salvation”:** God is bringing back home to Jerusalem those deported & scattered by harsh conquerors in a bloody invasion of God's city. Many survivors would have been elderly by the time of their return. Their children came as strangers to a city they had never seen. Modern photos and videos fill in images for us *of scarred, emaciated, fragile men, women, & children in other lands liberated from conquest and captivity, many hardly able to walk.* **Rough roads would simply overwhelm them.** With touching compassion,

Baruch seats them on royal thrones borne aloft on others' shoulders.

They were “*God’s salvation*”, in the flesh, welcomed with honor.

Now for our time *the Prophecy continues* ....

Are we or people we know feeling or living *in exile* ... far from home?

Are there similar *crooked paths* in our lives this Advent Season?

Are we willing to level a Mountain or fill in a Valley or two?

Recently, I've been feeling that a lot of things are *off the mark* in the world. Despite our having enough food to feed the planet, millions are starving. Even here, in a land of plenty, countless families rely on food banks. We know we need to care for **2** the Earth, our common home, but we buy too much stuff & fill our world with garbage and pollution. Despite seeing the damage conflict & violence cause,

... we seem think that *Peace* is out of our reach.

*Baruch and John the Baptist* speak of *the Lord* making the crooked roads straight and the rough ways smooth; this gives me hope that we can find some balance. John invites the people of his day, and us today, to turn back to God and

... *prepare the way of the Lord*, not only during Advent, but really all year long.

Where do we start?

It has been said, “*Everyone thinks about changing the world, but no one thinks about changing [themselves] himself.*” –Leo Tolstoy

**As followers of Jesus**, we are called to live in ways that make the crooked straight, to level Mountains of injustice & to fill in those deep Valleys of indifference. This is not always easy. **It means doing things differently.** We may even need to spend some time in *the desert* ... disconnected from social media, the internet, malls, and TV. **We need to adjust our attitudes & rediscover what's**

**important, which is the “*baptism of repentance.*” And, that takes courage.**

“*Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear.*” –Ambrose Redmoon

With a courage we may not feel, we can act for the Kingdom.

Advent is a season marked by expectation & hope. Listen to this ....

A group of high school students were asked to write headlines they would *love to see* ... and here are the top 6 from that group: "Peace declared all over earth!" "Hunger & poverty to be eliminated by year's end!" "No reports of child neglect in the US for over a year!" "Religious tolerance at an all-time high!"

"Vaccine for all forms of cancer, including AIDS, discovered!" "

Officials to investigate complete absence of violent crime!"

**"Wonderful dreams, but not very realistic," you say! "Impossible," you say!**

And you would be right with such thinking. Human beings on their own will never bring such things about. However, there is a *promise* which is deep at the center of

our faith and points to a spiritual truth lying at the center of this season

which calls us to be ready for God to intervene in the world,

**"... with God all things are possible."** (sermons.com/For God All Things Are Possible.Jewell.09)

*At this Advent Liturgy*, the familiar "I'll be home for Christmas" is a promise soaked in nostalgia & wishful thinking. **Or is it?** God's promise of a Homecoming stands as our Reality. Let us take the *Advent Challenge* to work for a better world, called *the Kingdom of God*. Remembering that whoever we are, however we are, wherever we come from, we are **"God's salvation," and we are welcome HOME!**