

Advent 2—Year C
Baruch 5:1-9
Canticle 16: The Song of Zechariah
Philippians 1:3-11
Luke 3:1-6

There is a lot of **noise** out there right now. A lot of **anxiety**. A lot of **worrying**, and **gaming out the future**—from **omicron** and all its attendant questions and “we just don’t know” answers *to another school shooting in Michigan to big court cases* with big ramifications with equally big feelings *to supply chain bottlenecks* that, according to the media, will ruin Christmas, *to inflation* concerns and the pressure of high prices. There is loads of **uncertainty**, a good amount of **heaviness**, and some degree of “**here we go again**” and “**will this ever end.**” We can **look out over the world** and certainly identify those who are **way too high on their power** and their **pride** and their **greed**. We can see those who are **feeling so low** and **beaten down**. We can certainly spot all that is **crooked**. And a good swath of humanity is just feeling **rough**.

And into this **anxious stew** comes **Advent**, settling over us like a **weighted blanket** to **soothe our rattled and frazzled souls**.

Advent proclaims that the **times are always ending and beginning**, and that **Jesus**, our **Redeemer**, **has come and is coming, always**. He is **Lord over all** that is **ending** AND all that is **about to be born, not with brute force** but with sheer **presence** that can **rearrange the landscape of the world and of our hearts**.

As far as I can tell, there is *precious little that we can control right now*, and that is a **miserable feeling**.

But our reading from **Baruch** would remind us that we do have some **choices**. **Baruch** calls us to **take off the garment of our sorrow and affliction**—ooof! Do we wear our **heaviness and distress** like a **favorite sweatshirt**, maybe a little **worn out and faded** but so very **familiar** and **comfortable**? Can we **trust** that **if we remove that heavy garment** that there is a **beauty, radiant with glory, that comes from God** just waiting to **take its place**? Are we willing to **put on a robe of righteousness** where our **values and behaviors, heart and mind and will and spirit and body and strength** are **all stitched together working in concert with God**? Can we fathom to **see ourselves as God does, worthy of a diadem of glory, full of splendor** for all the world to see?

We can control precious little, but **Baruch** reminds us that we can **choose** where we **stand** and where we **look**. **Sometimes it’s enough just to move**. If we are **feeling stuck**, can we start by **arising**. **Just get up**. Can we **find some height** to get to, **some place where we can see beyond all that is pulling us down**? Can we **get to a height** where we can **gain some perspective, look from a new vantage point**? Can we **look to the east with expectation**—*that’s where the sun rises*, you know? Can we **hold fast to the hope that all that has scattered our hearts and our lives in so many directions, can we hold fast to the truth that God has remembered us** and that **whatever in our lives has been exiled, lost, God is gathering to bring home**?

Baruch reminds us **God has ordered** that **that which is too high will be made low**. Can we **trust** that, one way or another, the **powerful and prideful and greedy** are **eventually brought low**, and can we **embrace that humility might be a good thing for our own soul** as well?

Baruch reminds us **God has ordered** that all that is low will be filled and made level. Can we believe that **God sees and remembers and is working to lift up all that can't see, either for all the barriers that tower over them OR because, when you're focused on just surviving the day, your eyes can't take in anything else?** Can we believe that **God is working to lift people to a level place where they can glimpse hope and breathe again?** Can we believe and trust that **God is working this miracle in our own weary souls?**

If we are **struggling to pray**, can we simply let **Paul pray for us**, like he does for the **Philippians?** Can we feel **Paul's longing for us with the compassion of Christ Jesus?** Can we take his prayer to heart that **our love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help us determine what is best?** As we continue to live by **decision trees weighing risks daily**, what a wonderful thing it is to know that **this prayer is being prayed without ceasing on our behalf.** Love overflowing with **knowledge and insight helping us determine what is best** sounds like a pretty solid place to stand just now.

Can we take in the amazing detail of that passage from **Luke** that reminds us that **God sends prophets into really specific times and places and circumstances?** Can we see that, just as **God sent us John long ago to cry out in the wilderness and prepare the way of the Lord, to call us to repentance and forgiveness of all that gets in the way of our relationship with God and neighbor and our very own self, SO NOW God is sending us prophets who are crying out in our wilderness.** God is sending us voices who are calling us to turn around and change direction. God is sending us messengers who are calling us to go beyond our well-worn, conditioned, and not always helpful reactions, calling us to seek forgiveness for all the ways we block the flow of love, calling us to let God rearrange the landscape of our hearts so that our hearts can once again be oriented to love and joy.

We can control precious little, but we can choose to hear and heed the prophets, we can choose to repent and be realigned to God's deepest desire for us, and for all humanity, which is to simply dwell in God's presence, that holy sacred space that overflows with love and compassion, that place of peace which surpasses all understanding.

Wouldn't that be an amazing place to rest and just be just about now?

If we can enter into that space, well, then **Advent** just might give us the greatest gift of all in this season.

We can control precious little, but beneath all that troubles us and our world, **God is on the move—shaping, molding, refining, holding, lifting, leveling, calling, wooing us and this precious world that God so loves.** *We can control precious little*, but **Advent is here to tell us, in the deepest possible way, God's got us**, and, as the prophets knew so long ago, with that as our bedrock truth, we can walk safely in the glory of God. Amen.

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