GOSPEL MESSAGE

December 5, 2021
SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Life in the Wilderness

The American Red Cross offers a training called Wilderness and Remote First Aid, during which participants learn skills to be used in case of emergencies such as low blood sugar, hypothermia, and burns when professional help is unavailable or far away. For someone experiencing a health crisis in a wilderness setting, a companion with remote first aid skills can be lifesaving.

When Luke introduces John the Baptist in today's gospel, readers are told that the word of God came to John in the wilderness. The wilderness mentioned here brings to mind a place that is remote, sparsely populated, and rugged. Yet there is a sense of another wilderness being illuminated here as well—the wilderness of a messy world where some have wealth and status while others experience food insecurity, injustice, and homelessness.

It is into this wilderness that John the Baptist proclaims that one is coming through whom "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6). Luke's intentional listing of all the authorities in power (vv. 1-2) indicates that he wants readers to know just how different John the Baptist and, more importantly, the one he proclaims are from the rulers of the day.

People were drawn to the message John proclaimed, yet throughout his ministry John was clear that it wasn't about him or his personal agenda but rather the work of God through him. He pointed to the Promised One and to the salvation Jesus offers. Like Jesus, John proclaimed a message that extended to the vulnerable and spoke of caring for our neighbors.

Similarly, as followers of Christ, we are commissioned to go into the wilderness, to bring good news to the little and the least, and to proclaim the work of God in our lives, through both our actions and our words. As we do, we bear witness to the promise that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the one who leads us from death to life.

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