

JESUS WAS SENT BY THE FATHER, SO THAT WE MAY DO THE SAME.

For this second week of Advent, we are looking at how Jesus came to be among us. Our gospel reading is reminding us of how John the Baptist gave witness regarding Christ; the one who is coming, and whose sandals he is unable to tie. As we are familiar with the bible story in that Jesus came to do the will of his Heavenly Father and the message he was to proclaim [which is still ongoing and current] and also that Jesus came to be a personal Saviour to each and every one of those who call upon his name, so that they may be saved from eternal damnation and death.

And that's an undeniable fact which we'd all agree to; for a need to have Jesus as our own personal Saviour in our lives, so that we may be able to enter into God's heavenly kingdom for all eternity in the next life. Otherwise life would be very difficult indeed to live. For where would we go to gain peace of mind, and have wounded spirits, minds and souls soothed in our deepest darkest hours? Every prayer we pray is done in and through Jesus. Without Jesus being in our lives and giving meaning to our existence, God will not recognise us if Jesus doesn't live within your heart.

When we pray; Satan is always there to accuse us before God of our sins, misdeeds and shortcomings, yet when God looks into our hearts and sees Jesus there, God dismisses Satan's attacks when we confess our sins seeking forgiveness. It is Jesus whom God sees in our hearts when he grants us pardon for our sins; try as we may, we can't forgive ourselves and make restitution to God. Hence we take on Jesus' persona and strive to become like him in this world.

So in this gospel lesson for today; how did Jesus make his appearance at the River Jordan? He is alluded to by John the Baptist. We don't get the full gist of Jesus' appearance in this gospel lesson, but we do know that it does occur later in the gospel readings and that God himself heralds in Jesus baptism when he spoke, or what some people thought happened to be thunder, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove. John the Baptist was also witness to this event.

As you may recall, John the Baptist is 'the one who is calling out in the wilderness' for people to come to repentance. So let's contrast to the wilderness of the desert to the wilderness of the cities and the towns of today? I may be totally wrong on this, but when I look around at church attendances, there is a lesser crowd gathering all the time than there used to be, and that worries me. Yes, yes, I'm aware that numbers don't mean a thing for church attendance, and you don't have to attend church to be saved, etc, because there are many believers out there who just don't attend church, and hopefully they are being spiritually fed in the proper manner?

But what if they're not being fed the right stuff? That bugs me to do something about it, which I attempt to do through my work. Just sharing a bit of myself, and on reflection and still weighing up the year that was – its nearly over [even though many things could still happen yet], I've come to one definite conclusion, and that is people are aware of Christ, and *in their own way*, they are confident that they have a relationship with him which *they hope* will get them into heaven, without being too full on for him. I don't know how you feel about that sentiment, but that makes me realise that they're right in a way, for we all will give an account of ourselves before the throne one day, and we will be shown by God himself as to what our eternal fate will be, either up or down.

And as we heard as I read earlier on when lighting the Advent Candle, that we are to follow Jesus' example, not lording it over other people, and not giving the impression that we are superior, but standing alongside of them and to be like Christ to them. And just on that, we are about to enter into 'Tis the season to be jolly' and many people will be aware of the Nativity Scene, and the birth of Christ and will share that with their families [except for Centrelink – no religious memorabilia] over the festive season. Some people will even attend church and God willing, we will see them again this year. I'm not knocking it, that's a good thing, but what happens when everything quietens down and goes back to 'normal' when the festive season is over.

For John the Baptist, the silence was deafening in his time, so he proclaimed the coming of the Lord. Even still, it seemed to impact upon him, that as a forerunner to Christ, he had a feeling of unworthiness to even be

in Christ's presence. In fact, he wasn't even aware that Jesus was right there among the people whom he was addressing. Many people do acknowledge that Christ is present in this world but believe their sins are too bad to be forgiven that they shy away from being forgiven and coming into fellowship with believers. I also find that many people find it a struggle to survive on a daily basis that they don't have much time to give to Christ. Perhaps we get like that as well; we get too busy and too involved in life that we forget to devote sufficient time to Christ to get us through each and every waking moment of the day! I need to do this, I need to do that! I, I, I, I, I.

What are some of the obstacles that stop you from being Christ to people? How do you feel about doing a bit of mission work and making Christ known to those around you? I guess the biggest fear that we have would have to face, is in getting our pride dented and our feelings hurt from opposition of bringing the message Christ and what he stands for to people. Sometimes, doing that can be confronting. And opposition not only comes from outside, it also comes from within; and in John the Baptist's and Jesus' day it was the Pharisees and other leaders who upheld the law that posed problems to God's will being done and setting people free from restrictive laws that kept them in bondage. Today opposition could come from people such as our families, other Christians, and an unwillingness to do our part for the Lord.

Being a Christian does have its struggles at times, which we've all experienced. And despite the trials and temptations we face, we know we have a Saviour whom we can believe and trust in. All this helps us to prepare for fulfilment, because one day we will come into God's presence when our lives are over. Everything will come to pass and all things will be made complete in Christ.

So while we live and exist, we have the opportunity, person to person to introduce other people to Jesus, so that they too can have a healthy, strong, loving relationship with him. And best of all, they can experience a newness of life through Christ and all he gives to us.

And by the way, what are some of the things that you would say about having Christ in your life and what he has done for you?

Would it be something like Jesus has drawn near, he has come close to live within you heart, deliverance has come, and he is present in this world! God reigns! He is Lord and his sovereign rule comes with blessings such as forgiveness of sins, protection from Satan and his demons, assurance of eternal life with God in his kingdom forever and ever. And we don't have to wait until we die, all humanity can experience it now in this life, because Jesus lives. We also worship a living God and not some inanimate object.

For those who have prepared their hearts and minds to live a life for Christ; they have come to realise this golden age of blessing in its fullest measure. And what a powerful impact Christ does have on this world still, because Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire! And those who repent and share with others of God's grace and mercy will produce fruit worthy to be in God's kingdom. And as believers we are all part of the 'good news' sent into this world. Amen.