

Second Sunday of Advent, December 06, 2015

The Collect: Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: Malachi 3:1-4 read from the New Revised Standard Version Bible

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

The Word of the Lord

Psalm: Luke 1:68-79 read from the New Living Translation bible

“Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people. He has sent us a mighty Savior from the royal line of his servant David, just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago. Now we will be saved from our enemies and from all who hate us. He has been merciful to our ancestors by remembering his sacred covenant - the covenant he swore with an oath to our ancestor Abraham. We have been rescued from our enemies so we can serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness for as long as we live.

“And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins. Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace.”

Epistle: Philippians 1:3-11 read from the New Life Version Bible

I thank God for you whenever I think of you. I always have joy as I pray for all of you. It is because you have told others the Good News from the first day you heard it until now. I am sure that God Who began the good work in you will keep on working in you until the day Jesus Christ comes again. It is right for me to feel like this about all of you. It is because you are very dear to me. While I was in prison and when I was proving that the Good News is true, you all shared God's loving-favor with me. God knows what I am saying. He knows how much I love you all with a love that comes from Jesus Christ. And this is my prayer: I pray that your love will grow more and more. I pray that you will have better understanding and be wise in all things. I pray that you will know what is the very best. I pray that you will be true and without blame until the day Christ comes again. And I pray that you will be filled with the fruits of right living. These come from Jesus Christ, with honor and thanks to God.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel: Luke 3:1-6 read from the Revised Standard Version Bible

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tibe'ri-us Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturae'a and Trachoni'tis, and Lysa'ni-as tetrarch of Abile'ne, in the high-priesthood of Annas and Ca'iaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechari'ah in the wilderness; and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On December 10 we remember Karl Barth theologian

Karl Barth was born on May 10, 1886, in Basel, Switzerland, to Johann Friedrich "Fritz" Barth and Anna Katharina Barth. Fritz Barth was a theology professor and pastor who would greatly

influence his son's life. In particular, Fritz Barth was fascinated by philosophy, especially the implications of Friedrich Nietzsche's theories on free will. Barth spent his childhood years in Bern. From 1911 to 1921 he served as a Reformed pastor in the village of Safenwil in north Switzerland.

Barth was originally trained in German Protestant Liberalism under such teachers as Wilhelm Herrmann, but he reacted against this theology at the time of the First World War. His reaction was fed by several factors, including his commitment to the German and Swiss Religious Socialist movement surrounding men such as Hermann Kutter, the influence of the biblical realism movement surrounding men such as Christoph Blumhardt and Soren Kierkegaard, and the effect of the skeptical philosophy of Franz Overbeck.

The most important catalyst, however, was Barth's reaction to the support that most of his liberal teachers voiced for German war aims. Barth believed that his teachers had been misled by a theology which tied God too closely to the finest, deepest expressions and experiences of cultured human beings, into claiming divine support for a war which they believed was waged in support of that culture – the initial experience of which appeared to increase people's love of and commitment to that culture.

In 1934, as the Protestant Church attempted to come to terms with the Third Reich, Barth was largely responsible for the writing of the Barmen declaration. This declaration rejected the influence of Nazism on German Christianity by arguing that the Church's allegiance to the God of Jesus Christ should give it the impetus and resources to resist the influence of other lords, such as the German *Führer*, Adolf Hitler. Barth mailed this declaration to Hitler personally. This was one of the founding documents of the Confessing Church and Barth was elected a member of its leadership council. An associate in that movement was another well known theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was forced to resign from his professorship at the University of Bonn in 1935 for refusing to swear an oath to Hitler. Barth then returned to his native Switzerland, where he assumed a chair in systematic theology at the University of Basel.

After the end of the Second World War, Barth became an important voice in support both of

German penitence and of reconciliation with churches abroad. Barth was featured on the cover of the April 20, 1962 issue of *Time* magazine, an indication that his influence had reached out of academic and ecclesiastical circles and into mainstream American religious culture.

Barth died at the age of 82 in Basel Switzerland December 10 1968.

Let us pray: Almighty God, source of justice beyond human knowledge: We thank you for inspiring Karl Barth to resist tyranny and exalt your saving grace, without which we cannot apprehend your will. Teach us, like him, to live by faith, and even in chaotic and perilous times to perceive the light of your eternal glory, Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, throughout all ages. **Amen.**