

Sermon: A Highway for God to be Born**Scripture: Mark 1:1-8****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: December 4, 2011**

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight, the rough places make plane and the crooked places make them straight and then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.” It just makes you want to sing it! Doesn’t it?

But this is what the season of Advent is about: preparing a way for the Lord in the wilderness of our lives. As the dark of winter descends upon us in the external world, advent is a time of polishing, tending and lighting the internal lamp to see that which maybe we’ve lost sight of over the course of the past year. What is it that makes a wilderness of our lives? Where are the crooked places that need to be straightened? Where are the rough places that need to be made plane in order to receive the ever-approaching God? Advent asks what are the changes that need to take place in our lives to make way for the Changeless One’s arrival? Where and how do we “make time” to make way for eternity?

Our time feels so limited, so often, doesn’t it? Especially around this time of year, our lives can reach a fevered pitch where it feels seriously like there are not enough hours in the day. Ask someone how it’s going for them and chances are you’ll hear “pew, it’s a crazy time of year! And the summer was too and then the fall was over the top, now Christmas. Oh and then there’s winter and the ski season, which I’m looking forward to but we seem to go non-stop then until the Spring and the end of the school year when the pace picks up even more. (pant, pant!)”

When was the last time you asked someone one how it was going and heard them say – “It’s goin’ slow, actually! It’s just going quiet, easeful and slowly and as Christmas approaches I just find the pace settling down even more.” I mean, would that be shocking or what? I’m not sure I’d even know what to say, I’d be so dumbfounded.

And yet this is one significant way, I’d suggest, that the wilderness is felt in our day and our culture, in the chaffing and drying wind-swept-ness of time racing through our lives and making of it a near desert at times. There’s our down-right busy-ness on

one hand, but there's also the tendency, at least I know it within myself, that if I do slow-down and try to moderate the pace, this specter of time future that comes pressing in upon time present and creates these rough places within me of anxiety or disquiet; whether it's a future conversation that I don't want to have but I know I need to, or a particularly difficult day or week coming up or some other anxiety ridden thought about what's coming. Whatever it is time future is a bit of a tyrant in me, which makes it near impossible for the God who revealed Himself to Moses as "I Am", not I Will Be but I Am, to be present to me. And then of course there is time past which can also make time present crooked with angles of what could have been and should have been, what I could have said or should have said. But God was not revealed as I Was either, but as I Am, which means that in so far as we are hooked by the past or anxious about the future God's advent will be impeded by the rough and crooked wilderness of our present moment.

You and I have a soul which is our access point to the Eternal, that dwells beneath the tyranny of time (as the Philosopher Jacob Needleman refers to it), a soul that is more fully and truly who we are, which is formed in the image and likeness of God. It's a place, if you want to refer to geographically, that is no dry crooked wilderness at all, but that is supple and green and moist and blossoming with abundance, it's a place of pure presence, of I Am-Ness, out of which emerges nothing less than our love and present-ness to one another, a love unimpeded by time.

It's to that place that we must somehow make a highway, a straight road through the desert of our time-deprived day to day lives so that the God who is I Am and who is the Beloved Other might enter in and offer the seed of himself to be born into the womb of our souls.

Let me close with a poem by DH Lawrence that I experience as inviting us into that verdant soul place. I invite you to breath and release time with me as we listen:

The history of the cosmos
is the history of the struggle of becoming.
When the dim flux of unformed life
struggled, convulsed back and forth upon itself,
and broke at last into light and dark
came into existence as light,
came into existence as cold shadow
then every atom of the cosmos trembled with delight.
Behold, God is born!
He is bright light!

He is pitch dark and cold!

And in the great struggle of intangible chaos
 when, at a certain point, a drop of water
 began to drip downwards
 and a breath of vapour began to wreath up
 Lo again the shudder of bliss through all the atoms!
 Oh, God is born!
 Behold, He is born wet!
 Look, He hath movement upward! He spirals!

And so, in the great aeons of accomplishment and debacle
 from time to time the wild crying of every electron:
 Lo! God is born!

When sapphires cooled out of molten chaos:
 See, God is born! He is blue, he is deep blue,
 he is forever blue!
 When gold lay shining threading the cooled-off rock:
 God is born! God is born! bright yellow and ductile
 He is born.

When the little eggy amoeba emerged out of foam and nowhere
 then all the electrons held their breath:
 Ach! Ach! Now indeed God is born! He twinkles within.

When from a world of mosses and of ferns
 at last the narcissus lifted a tuft of five-point stars
 and dangled them in the atmosphere,
 then every molecule of creation jumped and clapped its hands:
 God is born! God is born perfumed and dangling and with a little cup!

Throughout the aeons, as the lizard swirls his tail finer than water,
 as the peacock turns to the sun, and could not be more splendid,
 as the leopard smites the small calf with a spangled paw, perfect.
 the universe trembles: God is born! God is here!

And when at last man stood on two legs and wondered,
 then there was a hush of suspense at the core of every electron:
 Behold, now very God is born!
 God Himself is born!

And so we see, God is not
 until he is born.

And also we see
 there is no end to the birth of God.