

*a special eReflections series*

# Advent 2010

*Lectionary Readings*

## **Advent 2: “Necessary Preparations”**

December 5, 2010

*“Our spiritual life depends on His perpetual coming to us, far more than our going to him. Every time a channel is made for Him He comes; every time our hearts are open to him He enters, bringing a fresh gift of His very life, and on that life we depend. We should think of the whole power and splendour of God as always pressing in upon our small souls.”*

Evelyn Underhill

My husband and I recently became grandparents—arguably one of the most blessed things that can happen to a person! Several weeks after our tiny grandson was born we had our first opportunity to take care of him all by ourselves. Anticipation was high. Even though he was much too young to notice any of the preparations, I still felt compelled to clean the house, light candles, build a fire, and make cookies for this special “coming.” And while I was doing all that, I kept running to the window to see if he was here yet! The preparations for giving a warm welcome were made joyfully and full of loving expectation.

This is the spirit of Advent—sweet longing, joyful preparation and loving expectation. Sometimes it’s John the Baptist in his camel’s hair coat and leather belt that speaks to us of what it means to prepare the way of the Lord. Sometimes it’s preparing for the first visit of a tiny grandson that teaches the heart what it means to be ready and to wait with anticipation for the coming of the baby Christ.

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Print off the following Scriptures so that you can move away from your desk and settle into a place that is conducive to quiet reading and reflection. If you wish, have your journal with you in case there are any personal reflections you wish to capture in writing. Remember, you are not reading for sermon preparation or any other ministry purpose. You are engaging Scripture now for the sole purpose of allowing God to speak directly to your soul through the process of [\*lectio divina\*](#).

Begin by breathing deeply as a way of quieting yourself and opening to the Holy Spirit who is closer to you than your breath. Invite God to speak to you through his Word in these moments. Keep breathing.

*Read all four passages slowly and reflectively, not primarily to gain information or analyze the texts but listening to get a general idea of the Biblical themes contained in the lectionary Scriptures for the first week of Advent. Then choose one passage for reading, pondering and savoring today using the process of lectio divina. You might want to move through the passages in order or you might want to start with the Gospel and then move to the others as the week progresses. Once you have chosen the passage, read that passage four times (silently or aloud) asking a slightly different question each time. Allow for a few moments of silence after each reading.*

- In the first reading, listen for the word or the phrase that strikes you. In the silence that follows, just savor the word.
- In the second reading, listen for the way in which your life is touched by this word. What is it in my life that needed to hear this word today?
- In the third reading, listen for an invitation from God contained in this word. Is there something God is inviting me to be, or do in response to this word? What is my response back to God?
- Read the passage a fourth time and rest in the word you have received in total yieldedness and abandonment to the love and the will of God.
- Resolve to “live out” or incarnate the word you have received as God leads.

©Ruth Haley Barton, 2010. Ruth Haley Barton is founder of the Transforming Center. A teacher, spiritual director and retreat leader, she is the author of numerous books and resources on the spiritual life.

The lectionary schedule is taken from the Revised Common Lectionary Cycle A; Scriptures are quote from the New Revised Standard Version.

### **Isaiah 11:1-10**

1 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. 2 The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. 3 His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. 6 The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. 9 They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy

mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. 10 On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

**Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19**

1 Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.

2 May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.

3 May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.

4 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.

5 May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.

6 May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

7 In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

18 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.

19 Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.

**Romans 15:4-13**

4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. 5 May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, 6 that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. 8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name"; 10 and again he says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people"; 11 and again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him"; 15:12 and again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope." 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **Matthew 3:1-12**

1 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming,

2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." 3 This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" 4 Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, 6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

8 Bear fruit worthy of repentance. 9 Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."