

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, December 11th, 2022, Advent III
Isaiah 35:1-10 Psalm 146:4-9 James 5:7-10 Matthew 11:2-11

Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?

This is the question John the Baptist is asking when he knows his life is basically over. Herod has put him in prison, and he figures he probably will never get out of prison, and he doesn't have long to live. So, is he asking how's my life work been in vain? Is Jesus the one or is there another to come?

We are not facing what John the Baptist was facing but still, question is a good one for us to ask in our lives and at this time of advent. We want our life to have meaning do things that give us purpose and value in life. So, asking ourselves is what we do make a difference?

The meaning comes from action yes and making a difference, but also from our connectedness to something bigger than ourselves.

Jesus' answer... Go tell John the blind receives their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.

But Herbert O'Driscoll comes up with another alternative answer that Jesus could have given which goes something like this, "Well, I hate to be disappointing, but I have to be honest. The situation is very uncertain. There are lots of people refusing to see the vision I offer. They are blind and will remain so. There are lots of people determined to isolate themselves from me, they keep the distance that lepers have to keep. They refuse to hear me and our death to my words."

With covid and the isolation because of it and the decline in the church, it would be very easy to see that Herbert O'Driscoll's thoughts of an answer Jesus could have given makes sense today. It is tempting to feel as if there is no meaning in life and what we are doing doesn't make a difference.

I like what Herbert O'Driscoll ends with. I am sure that there was at least as much evidence for this kind of reply as there was for the first, the actual reply that Jesus gave. But Jesus chose to trust and hope in the future rather than to wallow in the difficulties of the present. This is what Isaiah and Mary, and James chose to do.

Perhaps this is what we also very much need to do in today's church. What do you think?

Amen

Go forth into the world in peace;
be of good courage;
hold fast that which is good;
render to no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak;
help the afflicted; honour everyone;
love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
and the blessing ...