

Preparing the Way for God
Luke 3:1-16
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
December 7, 2025
Rev. Jill Cameron Michel

I think we should give Nancy a round of applause for making it through the first several verses of today's reading. You know what I'm talking about...the way she read - more smoothly than most of us would have - through that list of names: Tiberius and Pontius, Herod and Philip, Lysanias, Annas, and Caiaphas. All those people who were in charge at the time of John the Baptist.

See often we are just glad to get through lists like that. We don't really think much about them. We consider them a historian's nod that places the story at a certain position in the past.

But what if those people are named for more than just historical placement of the story?

What if we are *supposed* to notice them...the ones in charge...the ones who have the power...the ones who make the decisions? What if we are *supposed* to notice them and then...

What if we are supposed to notice that they *aren't* the ones that God speaks to or through in this story?

Because, that's what seems to happen here in Luke, chapter 3. There are all these people who are in official positions of power and the word of God found *John*.

In fact, David Lose writes this about John...he says, "God chose a nobody...to prepare the way for God's own Son to come amongst us." Lose goes on writing, "And that happens to be a particular theme of Luke...that God regularly chooses people whom the world sees as insignificant through whom to do marvelous things. John the Baptist, Mary the illiterate unwed mom and teenager, the no account shepherds at the very bottom of the economic ladder who serve as the audience for the heavenly choir. Again and again, Luke confesses, God chooses people the world can easily ignore to participate in God's world-changing, world-saving activity" ([Advent 2 C: Audacious Historians | ...In the Meantime](#)).

And what that just might mean is that God might choose you and might choose me. God might be looking to us in our own time. Perhaps in this time, God is speaking to us.

Because remember last week when we said that Advent isn't a time of passive waiting, but of *active* waiting? It is a time when we are invited to do things that make a difference in the effort of bringing about God's kin-dom. And so we are again reminded that the movement toward God's kin-dom, the movement toward the peace to which we have committed ourselves, is an active movement that asks something of us.

But how do we get there? How are we called to help move the world toward peace?

Because, sometimes we struggle to really know what peace is. And too often we don't connect it with action at all. Too often people are coaxed to remain quiet in an effort to "keep the peace". Too often we think of peace as quiet and still. When we picture peace, we picture starry skies and resting people.

But peace asks more of us. Peace asks action. Peace asks justice. Peace asks us to be willing to be a loud voice even when others aren't ready to listen. Peace asks us to participate in the tearing down of injustices and the building up of a world aligned with God's heart.

In our reading today, Luke quotes Isaiah:

*"Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:4b-6).*

This is the peace which we are invited to be part of. It is peace connected with justice because until things are equitable, there will be no peace. It is peace connected with compassion because until we remove the barriers that separate us from one another, there will be no peace. It is a peace connected with care, care for all people not based on what they earn or deserve or if they are like us, but care simply because they are human. After all, there will be no peace until we can recognize the humanity of our neighbors.

And this peace is a change that levels the playing field. It makes a difference for everyone. It no longer allows one to lord their power or privilege above the others, but causes people to see each other eye to eye.

"There's a story from a small town in southern Italy, where each year on the first night of Advent, the town's baker would rise before dawn, not to make bread for sale, but to give it away.

"Children would wake to the smell of yeast and fire and make their way down cobbled streets to the bakery. There, they'd find warm loaves wrapped in cloth and tied with twine, stacked in baskets outside the shop. No sign. No cost. Just bread.

"One year, a young couple, new to town, barely making ends meet, expecting a child, received one of those loaves from their landlord, who simply said: 'The baker never sleeps through the darkness. He believes every act of waiting should be paired with an act of kindness.'

“That night, the woman went into labor. The birth was long, and the winds outside were bitter. But the couple stayed close, torn pieces from that bread steadying their nerves. By morning, their child was born, wrapped in blankets, held close, fed first from the strength of that gift.

“When the baker heard the news, he smiled, said nothing, and began kneading a fresh batch of dough” (Cameron Trimble, “Bread in the Dark” on *Piloting Faith*, December 1, 2025).

Sometimes our acts of peace involve baking bread, lending a listening ear, lighting a candle in the dark.

And, as Episcopal priest Judith Jones reminds us, sometimes our acts of peace, of preparing for God’s arrival, “[mean] rethinking systems and structures that we see as normal but that God condemns as oppressive and crooked. It means letting God humble everything that is proud and self-satisfied in us, and letting God heal and lift up what is broken and beaten down. [Realizing that] paths that seem satisfactory to us are not good enough for God. John calls us to let God’s bulldozers reshape the world’s social systems and the landscape of our own minds and hearts” ([Judith Jones - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)).

Friends, peace comes not from wishing or hoping, but from acting...acting with courage, acting with kindness, acting in ways that tear down the barriers to justice and build up the possibilities of God’s kin-dom. Whether those actions come with bread or with bulldozers, we are invited to act in the ways that God calls us.

May we, while we wait this Advent season, speak and act and live in ways that bring about the peace that lets all people know God’s love. May it be so.