

**Zephaniah 3: 14-20**

**Canticle 9**

**Philippians 4: 4-7**

**Luke 3: 7-18**

**Lord, may the words that I speak be the words that you would want spoken. Amen**

Well he finally arrived. I purposely did not look ahead at the reading, because if he showed up, I wanted it to be a surprise. I am delighted that he has finally made it into this Advent Season. It is really necessary that you understand the importance of the prophets and their prophetic words. Amos and John the Baptist were about 720 years apart in their lives, with Amos telling people what to look out for long before John came on the scene. It was only until 720 years later that the people were able to see whom John was talking about, and even then, they did not change their lives. Now we have been about 2000 years after John spoke the words; “You brood of vipers,” and still not much has changed with wars and love for each other and especially foreign people. I would say that the biggest changes on how people treat each have been affected more if you are black or white, but the love between people that are from other countries is worse. The people from China or India were treated better years ago than they are today.

So what are we to do to get to heaven and have eternal life? If this would be your first trip to America and a visit to a Christian Church, you would probably say “there are a lot of people in attendance in church, what is so difficult in their understanding of John the Baptist, seems pretty easy to me.” Only in America do we make a mountain out of a molehill, and do our dead level best to make life way more difficult than it needs to be. John only says that if you have 2 coats, just give one away. If you have more than you need, then give the other away. That is really not difficult, but you have to make the action to do it, it is not an automatic thing and for it to have any meaning YOU need to make the effort.

We really do not know the abundance we live with and to see the difference you don't need to travel to Liberia; just go across Charlotte to another area. One of the worst things that occur in this city is the abuse of women and children who are such easy targets to hit. There are many places in the Bible where women and children are abused and even in the ordination vows of a deacon are we to see that widows and children are taken care of. Loaves and

Fishes keeps people alive with the necessary food of which you do a great job in this church to see that the pantry is kept full; but affordable housing is not available in the Charlotte area. We are preparing to build the Moore House, which will house 85 chronic homeless people and here at Holy Comforter we have raised \$1,000 to be part of that project; but what we need are more places where families who find themselves without money for rent are able to stay in an affordable housing area. To have more rooms available would make this city a world-class leader with our modern airport, large bank buildings, and trolley lines to move people at an affordable price.

I was at the Urban Ministry Center Friday morning, making sure our volunteer dentists were able to use their skills and knowledge to give our homeless population better dental health; and you need to know that Vera Payne is the person who secures those dentists for us each month. There was one of the homeless men who was determined to tell Nancy Murray and myself his life story over the last few years. He began by talking about marijuana and cocaine, and it was evident to me early on where this story was going, and I began to interrupt him by saying the people that sell this stuff have no regard for people's lives. Those people are more interested in the money they make and not what it does to people. He continued on until finally he got to the point that he could hear my repeated talk about hurting people's lives. He stopped long enough to hear me and then he told us how he had been in jail for the last four months finally being caught doing wrong. I reminded him again how wrong he had been doing what he had done. He began to listen to me and finally confessed that what he had done was wrong, and he was sorry he had done it. He had changed his life and would not do that again. To me this was a prophetic voice in the wilderness of homelessness that was saying, "I am not really proud of what I have done, and my life is changed and I am following what God now tells me to do. This man became humble and apologized for what he had done, knowing that what he did was wrong, and I will not go down that path again. We need to all be that prophetic voice in the world as much today as ever, but more than that; people need to act on their words and not just let them slide off our lips without taking the time to act on them.

So where do you fit into all this during the Advent Season as we prepare for the Christmas Season? I think you need to attend the last Advent Meditation time and be available for the prophetic words of Amos calling you to begin in January to be part of a change in your life that calls you out into the world. Be prepared to go with us to places like the Emergency Winter

Shelter to hand out blankets and food for people to eat. Go with us to begin a new ministry of seeing that the dental clinic in the homeless shelter is funded with x-ray film and developing solution where we have just installed some better x-ray equipment.

Ask me what you hear from God that calls you to help others, and I will go with you to see that you are able to be part of that ministry.

Amen