

Sermon for 7 December 2025 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore

Second Sunday in Advent

Scriptures: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalter:72:1-7, 18-19 (*Insert, alternate leader/people*); Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

Sermon:

We begin this second Sunday with Isaiah's beautiful words of promise for a time of peace, that have the calming effect every time of prayer offers.

Building on this, the psalm asks God to give every kind of authority figure wisdom and kindness and justice of character that brings peace.

Then we sum up our theme of God taking our literal form as humans, giving us Christ among us, empowering us to live with him and be like him, as the church began to learn with Paul and other first-generation Christians.

All this prepares us for John the Baptist, who is always featured in this second Sunday of waiting and practicing the anticipation-side of faithfulness.

I went down to Mount Vernon Place last Thursday with the chorus I recently joined, to see the Washington Monument bursting with beautiful fireworks and then to sing inside Mount Vernon Church. It was beautiful and exciting, with all sorts of refreshments in booths around the square, and with the majestic sanctuary of the church where I served as associate pastor in the nineteen nineties. I wish for you some form of celebration and music and goodwill in this season. That quality is in these Scriptures and songs to encourage us all year. To trust that God is forever coming into our lives and changing darkness into light ...That's not a bad thing to practice believing.

To see old places take on new character isn't easy ... I miss Mount Vernon Place being Methodist ... but even growing up, and even growing older, has advantages, as each of us finds out.

Advent is about surprise, and seeing how much gratitude we can learn to practice. Let us pray about that now:

Dear Lord, give us signs of John the Baptist in our moments. He called, he challenged, he influenced, all in the direction of new hope, as well as from the good traditions of the past. People responded, sought guidance, turned away from dark thoughts and ways. That's happening in our church every week in the 12-step programs we welcome downstairs. Give us some fresh imagination about how to connect with them supportively. Do it with the day-care programs we shelter during the daytime as well. Surprise us with insight that can grow into new benefits for us and others. Guide us in this holy season into fresh optimism and kindness. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.