

2nd Sunday in Advent (B)

12/07/2014

John the Baptist and **Jesus** are very **different** and very **similar**. **John** forcefully pushes **moral purity codes** and promises **damnation** to any who do not *tow-the-line*. His message is that we need to be **pure** first in order for **God** to **dwell with us**. **Jesus** gently asserts that **God dwells with us** (this is an **objective given**) and no one and nothing can change this reality. He says that we need to **first know** that **God dwells with us** and then a moral life **naturally** follows.

Their **similarity** comes in their **insistence** that we **practice** - **do** - rather than simply **think**. **Jesus** and **John** know that **practicing** a way of life **leads** to a **change** in our **thinking**; but **thinking** alone **cannot change** our lives. Unfortunately, since the 12th century our **faith** has become more about **thinking** and less about **doing**.

The approach of **John the Baptist**, with his emphasis upon **moral purity** and **discipline**, provides us with a **container**. It sets the **boundaries** that allow us to measure our progress and to *keep our feet in the fire*. His approach is important and necessary. We need a **container** and we need **boundaries**. It is, however, only the **container**. It is not the **content**.

Practicing to live in the **container** eventually leads us to know that there is more; that there is **content** in the **container**. **Thinking** only, too often leads us to **mistake** the **container** for the **content**. We end up, as a

result, over-emphasizing worshipping Jesus Christ instead of also practicing the way of life that Jesus models for us. *Thoughts alone have no power to transform us.*

When we practice – **do**, we have a greater opportunity to recognize that the **container isn't the content, it is holding the content**. The **content** is our **knowing** that **God dwells with us**. It is our **knowing** more **unions** and fewer **divisions**. It is our **knowing** more the **sameness** that we all share **God dwelling with us** and less the **differences** that we are **self-sufficient** and **independent**. It is our **knowing** more that we are **loved as we are** and less that we are **unlovable in our state of impurity**. It is our **knowing** that we are **God's image now** and a greater **acceptance** that **God's likeness** is probably **eschewed**.

It is our **willingness** to practice living as **Jesus** models for us that **frees** us to **know transformation**. It is our **willingness** to practice living as **Jesus** models for us that **frees** us to **know healing** at our deepest levels. It is our **willingness** to practice living as **Jesus** models for us that **frees** us to **know love** and **removes fear**. It is our **choice**. It is a **daily choice**. It is most probably the reason that we are **encouraged to pray – do – each day**.