

In the name of God most holy,
Father who creates,
Son who redeems,
Spirit who dreams.

S

Girl with a dream for a guitar
Dad - had her put details to the dream
cost, size, color

how she will save, over how much time

Girl is determined, but is distracted but continues to save
Once, on an outing, her father sees her eyeing a pair of shoes;
he watches her succumb to the temptation and buy the shoes.

“Tell me about your guitar... will it have natural strings or metal?”

Girl sees the purchase of the shoes in a different light.

Though she still loves the shoes, she sees them as obstacles to her guitar,
a trip on the walkway to her guitar.

She takes the shoes back, gets a return of her money and keeps the
saving going.

T

On this Sunday in Advent, we are introduced to John the Baptist;
a colorful man with eclectic tastes in food and in clothing,
But one who, I imagine, stood on the banks of the river speaking loudly - both to be
heard and to make his point...

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Repent -

several understandings, though the word does not appear in the Old Testament.

Ezekiel 18

“If a wicked [person] turns from all sin which that one has committed,
keeps all My statutes and does what is lawful and right, that one shall
surely live.”

Considering all the failures of the past and make atonement to God - and
thereafter following all statues and laws.

Psalms 51

“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me... Deliver
me from the guilt of my sins, O God, and my tongue will sing of your
righteousness.”

Confession - to admit my faults to God and ask for purification

In the New Testament

The word is mentioned 56 times in the N.T.

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near”

kinda sounds like a threat - change *something* or you will miss the boat!

Acts 17: In the past, God overlooked the ignorance of people making idols out of gold, silver or stone. Now, he commands all people everywhere to repent.

Sounds like being sorry for things

Acts 3: Repent, and turn back to God

An attractive notion that suggests we turn our backs to things we have done in the past which have offended God and others.

In my view, all these notions of repentance are looking back and becoming sorry, remorseful, or penitential.

What would repentance look like if it had more to do with the future - and little to do with feeling negatively about ourselves, our past or our condition?

A

In your mind, make a “To Do” list for advent; think of a few things you need and want to get done before Christmas.

Shopping
wrapping
mailing

This list could be very short, if most of your tasks are done -
or long if there is a great deal more to do.

Now, what do you hope Christmas will be like? What kind of day do you want to have?
Dream BIG

How about what kind of world do you want to live in this Christmas and beyond?
Our hopes go beyond December 25, beyond ourselves and families and extend to all people and to the world itself.

Think, “I dream about a world where all children will be safe from gun violence”
or, ...

Now, let’s work backwards...

Review your “To Do” list. Figuratively, highlight the things that contribute directly to your deep hopes and longings for all people and for the world. There are many things on the list that are important but may not contribute to your vision and hope.

THIS ACT- of examining my actions and evaluating how they are bringing me closer to my goal or keeping me from accomplishing them - -

THIS IS REPENTANCE! Not looking backwards, but looking forward again towards our destination.

AND

Repentance has a prerequisite - a necessary first step:

In order to Repent, one needs first to DREAM and DREAM BIG.

For, what purpose do we have in examining our actions if we don't know in what direction we are headed?

How will we know if our actions and behaviors are getting closer to our objectives if we don't know what those objectives are?

What is our dream? Against what are we measuring our progress in our journey?

What does our "dream world" look like? Have you allowed yourself to have this dream? Have you put flesh on this dream or is it vague?

One prophet describes this dream like this:

The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.
The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.
They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

Before a little girl scrimps and saves her money to buy a guitar, she first had a dream - she SAW herself playing that guitar, her fingers moving over the frets and plucking the strings with beautiful melodies coming out of the body of the instrument like a voice from an angel!

During Advent, we are reminded that we have a dream
and that dream is so close, that the way for that dream is being prepared:
Mountains are made low

Valleys are leveled
Crooked ways made straight...

AND we repent...

How much of my day is spent working on the dream?

What am I doing that is distracting me?

Do I see a child in a manger or do I see freedom from sin?

Do I see water in a font or do I see healing waters?

Do I see only bread or do I see food for the world?

The voice crying out in the wilderness: Our dreams have come near.