

# Second Sunday in Advent

DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

Luke 3:1-6

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Analysis by Mark Marius

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.

5Every 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;  
6and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

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## DIAGNOSIS: Listening up to Those Speaking Down

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem)** : *Voices*

Tiberias, Pontius Pilate, Herod and Philip, Lysanias, Annas and Caiaphas were all voices of the day. They were the voices of

government, politics, and religion. They were voices that people were expected to pay attention to. They were voices that demanded heeding. It would follow then, by heeding these voices that one would experience favor. These were the voices heard from the mountain tops, from the high places in our world, who reached their heights by exploiting others. But our hope is that by listening to such voices we might elevate ourselves as well.

**Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Finding Our Own Way out of the Valley***

On our way up we can't help but leave others behind. It's the law after all. If we are focused on doing all the right things for ourselves then we have no time for others who may get in our way or trip us up. We are more intent on preparing our way than preparing the way for the Lord. So when the Lord's voice comes to John in the wilderness we are long gone, too busy listening to the other voices, and are likely to be offended by the message.

**Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem- with God) : *Roughed up***  
If we elevate ourselves then we will be brought down. If we have tried to smooth out our own way then that's all that we get. And in the face of God we will find out how rough it is; we all look crooked next to God. And the voices we had been listening to can do nothing for us because they too have been brought down.

**PROGNOSIS: Speaking out to Bring Everyone in**

**Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Smooth***

But the good news is that all flesh shall see the salvation of God, no matter where we are. God's voice may start out in the wilderness but it also comes to Jerusalem and proclaims God's grace for all humanity through the cross. The cross is the event that levels all things. The high and the low meet, all who are roughed up are made smooth, and the crooked made straight. And in the resurrection, the gift of new life changes our focus and

opens our ears to that which can truly elevate us, God's Word of love, grace, and forgiveness.

**Step 5: Advanced Prognosis: (Internal Solution) : *Filled***

And we are filled with God's grace that continues to smooth, continues to straighten us out, and keeps us level. Through the waters of baptism we are made new by daily bathing in God's forgiveness of sins. Partaking of Holy Communion also keeps us filled—filled with the Spirit and filled with grace.

**Step 6: Final Prognosis: (External Solution) : *Crying out to Others***

When we are filled with the Spirit we are also compelled to go out to the places in our world that needs to hear the good news of God. The Word of God that has come to us, we bring to the wilderness, the mountain tops, the suburbs, the inner city, etc. We share the power of forgiveness for sins. We recognize God in everyone and are committed to help others recognize God by seeing his salvation.