What Shall I Cry?

A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?”

These familiar words from Isaiah heralding Advent flowed easily. But this time, jumping off the page was the command. “Cry out!” And the response. “What shall I cry?” Taken aback, I thought, what shall I cry out in this time of Advent?
Hope, peace, joy, love? No, for these words, at this time of year, seem to have lost their meaning. Nothing more than stock “Christmas” words stamped on cards, ornaments, storefronts. So common, I fear, that we see them as simply a sign of the Christmas shopping season. Signs that time is ticking, and we had best rush to complete all the preparations, RSVP to the parties, wrap the presents.

There is no time to linger, to wait in the darkness. No time to listen for the voice that beckons to us from the wilderness. No time for the silence that is essential to prepare our hearts to ask the question, as we await his coming, “What shall I cry?” No time to hear the answer that can only come in the quiet emptiness of the wilderness.

I, too, have failed to wait. My lists are cluttered with pressing Christmas preparations. I have been too pre-occupied to stop to listen or respond to the voice that cries out in the wilderness. In fact, I was hurrying to write this reflection. One more pressing task to do before Christmas. But then Isaiah’s words jumped off the page.

Isaiah reminded me that the most important preparation I can make during this time is to prepare my heart. To take time to listen for the voice that says, “Prepare for his coming. Sit in the wilderness and listen for my call. Ask me what you should cry out. Prepare your heart, so that when you kneel before him yet once again, your heart will be ready to hear my answer, my answer especially for you. My answer which shall be bathed in his pure light and in his redeeming grace.”

His redeeming grace, which brings more hope, peace, joy, love than my heart, our hearts, could ever hold. Redeeming grace that holds our every question. That comforts, and then emboldens us to go forth to live out the answer, unique to each of us. To serve him, and in so doing, to feel the warmth of his pure light. To show his grace by caring for those in need, and then in those moments to feel his love surrounding us. Claiming us. Redeeming us. All the year through.

I am grateful to Isaiah for reminding me to take time to listen for the voice that cries out. To invite me to ask the very personal question, “What shall I cry?” The prophet who shall gently lead me into the mystery yet once again. May it be so for you during these sacred days, too.

In deep and abiding gratitude for all the ways you have made straight a highway for our God through Faith In Practice, in anticipation of how God shall lead us forth in the year to come,
and in joyous wonder of his redeeming grace, may your Advent and Christmas be filled with his light and his love.

Rev. Linda L. McCarty
President & CEO

Silent Night, Holy Night
Son of God, love’s pure light.
Radiant beams, from his holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace.
Jesus, Lord at thy birth
Jesus, Lord at thy birth

Thank you Bally! This exclusive, luxury store hosted a special shopping event and 15% of each purchase benefited Faith In Practice. Thank you Sean and Rachel Boutros for making it happen.

Watch our 2017 Silent Night video!