

On this last Sunday of the church year, we immerse ourselves in the sweep of the Jesus story, from foretelling to proclaiming, from John the Baptist to John of Patmos, a story of birth and death, mercy and brutality, deep sorrow and impossible surprises.

Although our readings today are focused on Jesus, his story is God's story of creation and wilderness and exile and a promised land.

We start with the unwashed figure of John the Baptist – looking and sounding like the prophets of old and preparing the way for the coming Christ. I ask that we not just listen to but live within the story,

allowing it to continue to shape us, to bring us light and hope, strength and courage, direction and wisdom. Allow each season of the church year to offer us insight for our walk as people of faith.

We begin with the Advent prophets crying out. Who are the crazy prophets of our day and what wisdom do they bring to us?

Then from the familiar story of the Christmas birth, we might learn to see God's holy people in forgotten back alleys, in the rubble of war and in the faces of anonymous travelers.

May we be granted our own epiphanies, those AHA moments – when we are surprised by acts of forgiveness and mercy – always signs of God working among us.

And then when those Lenten seasons come - when we have to pull ourselves through the mind-numbing and back-breaking demands of making a living and caring for others. When our lives are sidetracked by a broken, angry, fractured, frightened, and wounded society... when we must face down the constant temptation to greed and fear

Until we are hanging on by our fingertips – when the suffering is relentless, the sun is blotted out and the pain is bottomless – those times of darkness and sorrow and loss...that we can't imagine calling 'holy'

Until in one glorious moment – the Easter dawn breaks upon us. –
That moment when we grasp not just a new day, but new life beyond what we have known. **That life changing moment when we are flooded with spirit and power which leaves us holding our breath**

AND WE KNOW

That this story of God's love for us in Jesus is OUR STORY – told so we would know that the powers of this world will one day fade away, that love is life and is found in mercy and forgiveness, that it is never too late to turn towards the Son or to reach out to someone in need.

Today we are invited to walk with Jesus through this story of his life, but more importantly, we are to remember that Jesus came to walk alongside us in the story of our life. THAT is the love of God in Jesus – who reaches out to a drowning humanity in order to pull us to shore, to give us life.

In each of our days – days of longing or laughter, Jesus is THERE, Jesus KNOWS; and Jesus walks with us on our own road

Jesus did not come among us to prepare us for a life to come; he came to walk with us in this life,

and to lead us on the path to peace.