

## Advent Sunday Week 2 - Luke: 3:1-6

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I'm a math and science person. I've grown accustomed to finding the "right" answer. And I struggle to hold that in tension with my Christian calling to go out and build the Kingdom. Because once I step away from my coding languages and math equations, things don't operate as expected. There are no "right" words, or at least they never come to me at the right times. I can't use some well-defined order of operations to cleanly solve others' problems. I can't easily extricate myself from my complicity in structural sin or balance competing goods that have different values for people with different perspectives.

And I so dearly long for the "right" answers. I want to be able to pick up the phone and have a conversation with God where I ask for and receive clear instructions on how to best use my time to build towards a better world. But I rarely receive a clear reply.

So I'll sometimes just go out and try to fill in the nearest valley to the best of my abilities. And occasionally things fall into place and my efforts translate directly into visible results. But more often I put in effort for weeks on end and, stepping back, can't tell if I've helped or hurt the cause. Maybe I was too narrow-minded to see things from others' perspectives. Or maybe I didn't quite say the right thing. Or I thought that I needed to fix a situation and found out I was the person there least equipped for that role. Instead of filling in the valley, it can feel like I've just been pushing dirt around and have made another hole or two in the process.

And if I'm not careful, the perfectionist in me will get lulled into inaction. I'll allow myself to get caught up in considering efficiency and how to design better systems. I'll look at what others have done and start finding ways to criticize their efforts rather than my own. Or, most likely, I'll just allow myself to get distracted with anything besides my perceived ineptitude.

And sure, sometimes our efforts aren't particularly fruitful, but that doesn't give us an excuse to stop working for a better world. Nor should it allow us to slip back into our safe places, away from the margins, pretending that they don't exist. We aren't called to smooth out the rough paths all by ourselves, but we are called to do our part as a member of a larger community. We're a pilgrim people, ever journeying towards God, ever striving to build the Kingdom, ever preparing the way of the Lord. And we aren't necessarily called to get everything right the first time. But we are called to try.

### Prayer

Dear Lord, I want to be your hands and feet in the world, but this world is complex and I can't always figure it out. I'm constantly besieged by questions of inadequacy. Help! Help me to make some sense out of the choices I have. Help me to act, even when I feel inadequate. Help me to do the right thing, or if there isn't quite one "right" answer, help me to choose well amidst competing goods. Help me to get out of my own head and shift my focus to others. And help us collectively seek solutions that protect the vulnerable, forgotten, and marginalized.

Amen

### Suggestion for Service

Think of a friend who is already volunteering in service of a vulnerable, forgotten, or marginalized population. Ask to join them in their service this week.