

REFLECTION

By **Ben Cox**, Sojourners Internship Program

ADVENT 2019
Week Two

"I am not worthy to carry his sandals." - Matthew 3:1-12

Although I want to be like the wheat that will be gathered by Jesus, and not like the chaff burning in "unquenchable fire," I am, in fact, made of both wheat and chaff. Being the perfect follower of Christ is easier said than done; just as wheat develops chaff, so too do humans make mistakes.

I have at times felt so scared of messing up that I had no desire to do anything. I can relate to John the Baptist, who felt unworthy to carry Jesus' sandals. Yet, Jesus loved him just as he loves us. Furthermore, John the Baptist assures us that we are more than our past mistakes. Christ will burn our chaff, what separates us from God, so that it will be no more and will not define us.

It would be easy to misinterpret John the Baptist's words and think that some people who make mistakes will forever burn in this unquenchable fire, but that is not the Gospel. I like how 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 explicitly describes God's use of fire on the last day - it is cleansing, not condemning. According to 1 Corinthians, everything we do in our lives that is not built on Christ will be burned up, yet the builder (i.e. us) will be saved...but only as one escaping through flames. I will never be perfect here on Earth, and there is a chance I'll mess up at this nonprofit that I support as a Sojourners intern, but that imperfection does not define me and will not stop me from living boldly and doing my absolute best.

SERVICE SUGGESTION

The classic example of a "nice thing to do" in school was to sit with someone at lunch who was by themselves. I'm no longer in that school environment, but there are still people like that who I see every day on my way to work or regularly at the gym.

Would it hurt to introduce ourselves to that person and listen if they want to share? I have a fear of their reaction, but chances are that recognizing their presence will be appreciated as long as we are appropriate. I invite you to try this with me the remainder of Advent.

Focus: SIMPLE LIVING

As temperatures drop below freezing I find myself wanting to adjust the heating in the house; but John the Baptist didn't even have a house. Having enough money to buy a variety of groceries seems like a "need" to me rather than a "want", but John the Baptist ate locusts and honey. Although I still would like to have a roof over my head, thinking about John the Baptist certainly makes me question what "needs" I actually have, and encourages me to value a "theology of enough."

PRAYER

Loving God, sometimes I fail. I'm afraid of messing up. I may value my reputation more than I value doing the right thing.

Please help me hold you at the front of my mind as I try to do what you would have me do.

Thank you for cutting down and burning every aspect of myself that is not built with you as the foundation.

Please guide me so I may be satisfied with having enough and know how I can best serve you.

Amen.

