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*Second Sunday of Advent
December 9, 2007*

*Isaiah 11:1-10
Matthew 3: 1-12*

Something Is Happening Now

A couple of years ago at a youth lock-in, I knew there was something brewing - some kind of plot or plan that I was supposed to be kept away from. It all started when Mr. Graeme Shields came up to me and asked if he and some of the others kids could decorate my office door. Seemed innocent to me, so I said, "sure, there is paper and markers in the supply closet." (I think, maybe, that was my first mistake). So, off Graeme went as I continued playing a game of chicken foot with the chaperones in the fellowship hall. The next half hour was a buzz of exciting activity; kids running in and out of the room, whispers being hushed behind me, giggles and shrieks of joy.. I pretended not to notice, but really, I new something was happening. Eventually, I was suspicious enough - okay, really, I was worried enough, so I called a time-out in the game of chicken foot and started to walk upstairs to my office. The signs were all there - literally, the walls and stairs were covered with

signs that read, "Kim, don't come this way," and "Kim! Stay out!," there was even a sign that said, "If Kim walks down this hallway she will evaporate into thin air and the world will no longer know of her existence!" Yep! Something was definitely happening! Now, as I rounded the corner to my office all I saw was a blur of Graeme Shields flinging himself across my door as a whole group of kids started screaming, "No, No, don't come down here!"

Now really, what did they expect me to do? "Okay, you kids you have fun, I'll just go back downstairs and play my game of chicken foot." Riiight! I've worked with youth long enough to know better than that - so unfortunately, their secret mission had been busted. And when I finally managed to peel Graeme off the door - I found... well, I'm not sure what I found: The floor from the supply closet to my office was literally covered with red glitter. Pipe cleaners, Q-tips,

and paintbrushes were methodically taped to the door - and beautifully bordered with band-aids and a wide variety of art supplies. I starred at the "project" for awhile and then looked at Graeme and asked, "What did you do?" He just smiled and said, "We decorated your door, don't you like it?" Needless to say, I wasn't all that amused and quickly went back to playing chicken foot.

The reason I share this story is because it reminds me to pay attention - to realize what is happening around me and react in kind. Had I paid closer attention to all the clues, the signs, the abundance of warnings - that something was happening - I may not have been quite so shocked and put-out in the end. Like Matthew's account of John the Baptist, it's a billboard if you will, a knock at the door - we are being clearly informed that something is taking place. Appearing before us is a man wearing camel's hair, and the only thing he ever ate was locusts and honey - really, that was warning in and of itself. Something was not normal, people usually walked around in robes made out of cloth, they ate regular, everyday food.. so for John the Baptist to be so starkly different, it is clear that something is amiss, something's up. And pretty soon he starts shouting, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near! Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths

straight." If your anything like me, you quickly busy yourself in your projects, just keep busy, don't make eye contact, oh please, don't let this man bother me. Because really, it's something new, it's a surprise, and it calls us to action. And that makes us squirm. We try and avoid it like a bunch of whispering, giggling teenagers in the fellowship hall.

But really, I believe this is the whole meaning of Advent. The coming of God into our world through the birth of a baby boy. Light coming into the darkness, shining a path to God's revelation. There is something happening, something new, something different.. and while it may surprise us, and startle us from our comfort zones, God is hoping it will grab our attention and change our lives.

Now, I am sure many people walked away from John the Baptist as he called for their repentance. Just like I went back to my game chicken foot instead of joining in as a bunch of teenagers lovingly made a huge mess outside my office door. It isn't so easy to quickly adapt to something new in our lives. But still, something is happening now. John is challenging us with words of preparation - get ready, something is coming - decide what you will do about it.

Something is happening now, today, right here, right now, as we witness God at work in the life of our congregation. First, a child will be brought forth, to receive the Sacrament of Baptism. And as our community comes together and says, “yes, we will do our part to help Summer Hawkinson know all about the love of God,” something will happen.. as the water is symbolically poured, something will happen... as each of us remembers our commitments to discipleship, something will happen. A baptism is hard and true evidence that something is taking place - a family is pledging faith in God, a child is claimed by God’s love, a community is promising to work together to share God’s love. It all causes us to stop and pay attention. And as John reminds us, the kingdom of heaven has come near.

And just like Paul and Sunny will stand before us today and pledge their desire for Summer to grow up in God’s family - so did George and Cathy Shields do that many years ago as they held Graeme and asked for his baptism. Something was happening then, and something is happening now... as Graeme comes before us on his own will today.. we see a child of God who has grown up in the church, who has explored his faith, who has considered the costs of discipleship, and we listen and we pay attention as he answers, “I do & I will.” It’s all a sign my friends, that God is taking hold in

our world - offering us a life of love, and calling us to respond. We can turn a blind eye, we can ignore the shouts of warning; or, we can trust, we can wonder, and we can approach God with a willing heart - “yes, I accept the call to have God live in and through me.”

Individually, we respond to John the Baptist, we respond to the warnings taped along the walls of our lives, and we respond to God calling us to follow and continue the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. My friends, the signs are all around us - something is happening now, might we respond as God’s faithful people. Amen.