

What Should We Do?

Zeph. 3: 14-18a; Is. 12; Phil. 4: 4-7; Lk. 3: 10-18

In the Gospel for this Sunday, John is continuing to spread his message of repentance and to baptize the people. He told them that they must undergo a complete change of heart and mind and break from their sinful ways. But the people were finding his message to be too abstract. So they asked him a simple and direct question: 'What should we do?' What should they do to prepare the way of the Lord?

John answered them just as simply and directly. He told the people to share their possessions with those who had none. To the tax collectors, he said that they should only collect what was due and nothing more. To the soldiers, he said that they should not threaten anyone in order to extort money and that they should be satisfied with their wages.

Notice that John did not tell the tax collectors to stop collecting taxes or the soldiers to stop policing. He merely told them to treat people fairly and honestly and to not take advantage of them because of their position. He told the people to treat others the way they would want to be treated and to share the abundance that they had received with others who were disadvantaged.

This is the message for all of us. We should treat people fairly and, if we have received much in this life, we should share what we have with those who have little.

There is a book called *The Tipping Point* written by Malcolm Gladwell in which he writes about people called *Mavens*. *Maven* is a Yiddish word that means someone who accumulates information. But not only that, a Maven wants to share the information to benefit others. If you tell a Maven that you want to buy a car, not only will he/she tell you what is the best car for your needs, but also where to buy it, how much you should pay, and what other deals you can get. He/she will even go with you to buy the car.

Why does the Maven do this? Certainly, the Maven is interested in the car market and has accumulated a wealth of information about it. But, more importantly, the Maven is interested in people. The Maven is driven to make sure that other people benefit from their knowledge. They don't want to hoard the information.

I met a Maven at my workplace. Bill worked in the Mail Room but, if you wanted to buy something, you had to speak to Bill. One day, I casually mentioned that I was in the market for some winter tires. Bill immediately told me the best brands according to *Consumer Reports*, the prices at the various tire outlets, and where the sales were taking place. By the time I got back to my desk, Bill had emailed me the specifications for the recommended tires and ads from several tire outlets that carried them.

I was not a close friend of Bill. But he was genuinely interested that I receive the benefit of the information he could provide. He did this for everyone who crossed his path.

A Maven brings the message of John the Baptist to life. We would do well to emulate a Maven. Take a genuine interest in people. Don't hoard our wealth. Share it with those who have little. Use what we have accumulated, whether it be money or possessions or knowledge or time, to help others. This is how we can repent from the ways of the world where climbing up the ladder generally means taking advantage of others. This is Gaudete Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent. Repent and rejoice! The day of the Lord is near.