

**“A Christmas Carol Revisited
“The Ghost of Christmas Past: Remembering as a Path to Hope”**

In our Advent Sermon Series, “A Christmas Carol Revisited” we have been on a journey with Scrooge and this week we encountered the Ghost of Christmas past. The Ghost of Christmas past travels back to the past with Scrooge allowing him to experience with all of his senses the identity he claimed as a young man and how things have changed as he has aged. This Ghost of Christmas past challenges us to reflect on those formative life experiences that shape who we are and where we might have fallen short. Another formative witness of our Christian past is the life of John the Baptist, he is often depicted in a sensory rich way. This week, we will explore with our five senses how each of us can begin preparing the way of the Lord. ---Pastor Rebecca

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon: **“The Ghost of Christmas Past: Remembering as a Path to Hope”**

This week's sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, December 11 (Isaiah 40:1-5) VISION

This text from Isaiah reminds us that our past is filled with grief, pain and destruction. The Israelites need liberation from oppression, and restoration of the people to their land. This text reappears in all four gospels with John the Baptist. How does the imagery of valleys being lifted up while mountains and hills being made low foretell of God's reversal? Do you anticipate change and reversal in the things you see while waiting on the Lord during Advent?

Pray: *God, may you dwell within my heart so that I might see your Advent wonders turned upside this season, Amen.*

Tuesday, December 12 (Mark 1:1-8) LISTEN

Hear the good news! Hear of the hope we have in our Messiah! When we hear that voice crying out in the wilderness, our ears tell us that Christ is coming. Throughout Advent, we hear carols, familiar stories, but we also listen to the hardships and struggles our companions are experiencing in a season that does not leave much space for grief. Today, listen with compassion to those around you. Listen to the voices of those who are in their own wilderness. Listen in hope for what is yet to come for a prophet comes with good news!

Pray: *God, when we hear things that are hard to process, may we listen for voices in the wilderness that bring us hope for you are still with us, Amen.*

Wednesday, December 13 (Matthew 3:1-12) TOUCH

John the Baptist is not known as a conventionally clean figure in our bible. He is a man with texture and depth that is dense as camel's hair, and tough as leather. This allows us to feel his human nature and wilderness roughness. John, a human comes before Jesus to differentiate himself from the Messiah, who is both divine and human. The unique human ability to touch and feel with our hands allows the world to sink in a new way. Touch a Christmas tree (real or artificial) and think about the wilderness from the Israelites past and the wilderness John the Baptist came from.

Pray: *God, when we feel things with our fingers, may we be reminded of the many years our ancestors were wandering through wildernesses yearning to feel the transformation of our Messiah, Amen.*

Thursday, December 14 (Luke 3:15-17) TASTE

John ate locusts and honey, perhaps that is not an appetizing taste to you. The foretaste of the heavenly kingdom is upon us when John invites people to prepare the way of the lord. What tastes do you enjoy during the season of Advent? How do you prepare for the season of Christ's coming by what you eat and how do you leave space for the holy imagination during this time?

Pray: *May my life be sweet like honey and determined as locusts to prepare the coming of Christ this season, Amen.*

Friday, December 15 (John 1:19-28) SMELL

The sense of smell is something we often neglect in the teaching of the church. However, smell is the sense that is most directly connected with memories. When we smell the freshly cut trees, warm cookies baking in the oven, and peppermint sticks, we are reminded of the season we spend waiting for Jesus to be born. Smell has a story that harkens to the past with a hope for the future. "As we stop to take stock of our lives it is important that we remember that the journey we take is one empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit." (Bob Cornwall)

Pray: *God, may the fragrances that remind us of the past transform a nostalgic history into a hopeful future rooted in the love of your Holy Spirit. Amen.*