

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (12/5-6/2009)

Baruch 5/1-9, Psalm 126, Philippians 1/4-11, Luke 3/1-6

Some of the most important people in professional sports today are the players' agents. These are the men and women who represent the players at the bargaining table when salaries and perks are being worked out with the team owners and bean counters. It's probably safe to say that the players would get much smaller salaries were it not for the vigilance of their agents, most of whom get 10% of the final product themselves.

In a way, John the Baptist was Jesus' agent, not in monetary matters obviously, but in the sense that he prepared the way for Jesus.

John begins the preaching about the Kingdom, and Jesus will fulfill it.

John points out Jesus to people wondering if he, John, is the long-awaited Messiah.

Could Jesus have made it without John?

Undoubtedly, but it might have taken him a good deal longer to get into his ministry if he had not received the endorsement of the Baptist.

John was a very ascetical person, spending a good deal of his life alone in the wilderness.

That fact gave him credibility before the people.

They wanted their prophets to look and act like prophets.

John fit the bill perfectly.

But he was a man whose destiny was totally tied up in his cousin, Jesus.

When John emerged from the wilderness down near the Dead Sea, a particularly harsh bit of Biblical land, he began to call for change.

I suppose you could say that he was both an agent for Jesus and a change agent in his own right.

The people of Israel were in a sad state, depressed and floundering under the heavy hand of the Roman occupiers of the land.

John wanted them to see that the Lord was already active in their lives, and that they needed to respond to that presence.

The only proper way to respond called for them to have a change of heart and turn to the Lord.

That was the gist of John's message.

I wonder at times how we would greet John if he came into our midst with that same message - to prepare the way of the Lord.

In the musical play, "*Godspell*", the opening scene has John belt out his message in song, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"

The song is so powerful and the message so appropriate that it sticks with you long after the play is over.

I still find myself silently singing that call to action every year at Advent time, and it's been over 20 years since I saw the play!

Prepare ye the way of the Lord!

What preparations do you need to make?

What needs changing in your life?

Let John be your agent too; let him show you the way to true change.