great indeed is the heart of man, wide and spacious as if it were a world in itself. Do you wish to know how great and how profound it is? Behold what a sweep of divine knowledge it can embrace: *For he hath given me true knowledge of the things that are: to know the disposition of the whole world, and the virtues of the elements, the beginning and the endings and midst of the times, the alterations of their courses, and the changes of the seasons, the revolutions of the year, and the dispositions of the stars, the natures of living creatures, and the reasonings of men* (Wisd. vii. 17).

See then that no small thing is the heart of man which can contain so much. And see also that its greatness is not in bodily quantity, but in the power by which it can receive such knowledge of the truth... We keep within us, as in a picture, the roads, we have travelled. The sea we have voyaged over we can recall in moments of quiet recollection...
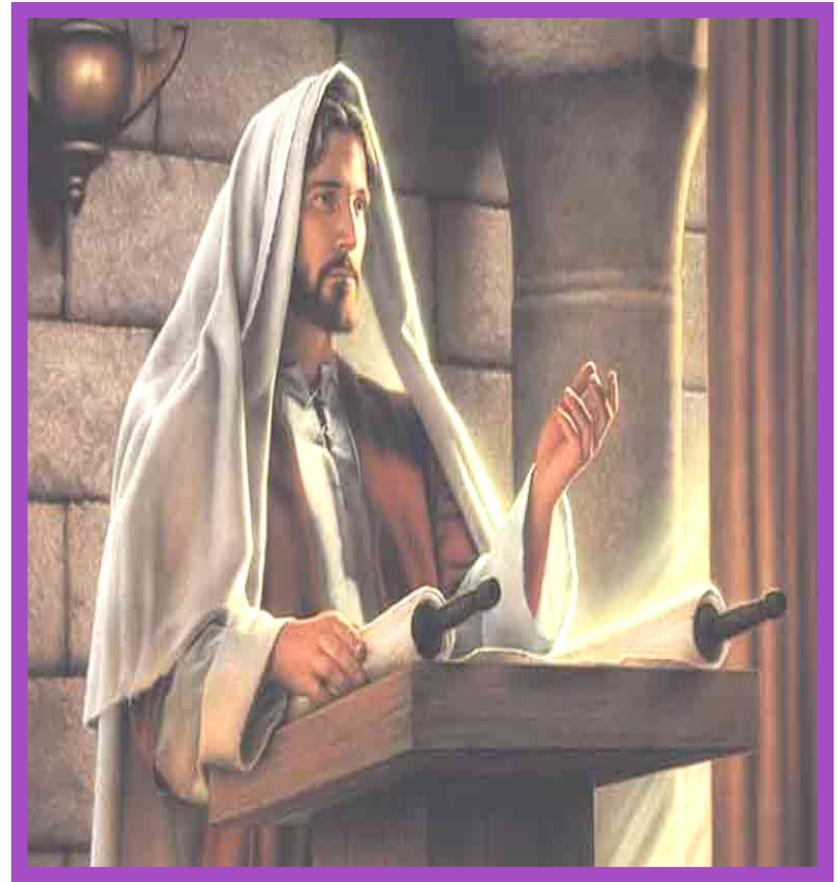
If then, the heart can contain so much and is not something small and narrow, then let a way for the Lord be prepared in it, and let His path be made straight, so that the Word of God and His Wisdom may enter there. Prepare this way by a worthy manner of living, and with good works make straight the path, so that without hindrance the Word of God may thread this way to you, and give you understanding, both of His Coming and of His Mysteries, to Whom be glory for ever and ever.

Sermon on Prepare the Way of the Lord From the Father's of the Church # 127 - 1

Jesus, our first Preacher!

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Based on the Divine Office-Douay-Rheims Version
Volume 1 - Pages 1129 (1962 edition)
Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 3: 1-6
by: Origen, Priest and Confessor

When a prophetic message was intended for the Jews alone the names of the Jewish Kings were placed at the beginning. For example: The vision of Isaias… in the days of Ozias, Joachim, Achaz, and Ezechias, Kings of Israel: (Is. i. 1) nor other names do I see designated in the time of Isaias, except the kings of Judah. In certain prophets we can read narratives of the Israelite kings, as in Osee (Osee i. 1), where he says: *In the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joas, a king of Israel*. When the mystery of the Gospel was to be proclaimed, and its word spread abroad through the whole world, in which John in the desert was the leader, and the world lay under the Roman Empire of Tiberius, it is recorded, that in the fifteenth year, *the word of the Lord was made unto John*. If salvation was to be announced alone to the nations that were to believe, and Israel was to be entirely excluded, it would have sufficed to say: *in the fifteenth year of Tiberius and under the governorship of Pilate*. But, because many were to believe both from Judea and from Galilee, these kingdoms are also recorded in the inscription; and so it is written: *and Herod being Tetrarch of Galilee, etc.*

Of old the word of the Lord was made unto Jeremiah, the son of Elchias in Anatoth, in the days of Josia King of Judea. Now a message of God is made unto John the son of Zachary, which never was given to the prophets in the desert; but since *more are the children of the desolate, than of her that hath a husband*, accordingly, the word of God is made unto John the son of Zachary in the desert. Note, that this has more meaning if the desert is considered mystical, and not according to its literal sense. For he who preaches in the desert it is needless to cry out aloud, since there is no one to hear him speaking. Therefore the precursor of Christ, and the voice of one crying in the wilderness, preach in the desert of the soul that has known no peace. Not alone then, but even now a bright and burning lamp first comes and preaches the baptism of repentance unto the forgiveness of sins. Then follows the True Light, as itself has said: *He must increase, but I must decrease* (Jn. iii. 30).

The word was made in the desert, and came forth to all the country about the Jordan. For around what other places should the Baptist journey unless those close to the Jordan, so that whosoever had the will to repent, would there be near the water of purification? The name of Jordan is interpreted as *descent*, or *coming down*. Coming down and running in a bounteous flood is the River of God, the Lord our Savior, in which we were baptized. This true and life-giving water is, he proclaims in his baptism, unto the forgiveness of sins... He that ceases to commit sin, will, in his baptism, be forgiven his former sins. But if he remains in his sins, and so approaches the baptismal font, his sins will not be forgiven him.

Therefore, you should not approach and receive baptism without due caution and careful reflection. Strive first for *fruits worthy of penance*. Remain for some time in a becoming manner of living. Cleanse yourself of uncleanness. Keep yourself free from the vices; then when you have begun to stamp out your offenses, remission of your sins will be given unto you. And that you may be forgiven, forgive those that offend you.

This same message we find in the Old Testament, in the prophet Isias: *A voice of one crying in the wilderness*… For the Lord wishes to find in you a way prepared before Him, where He may enter in, and have there a right of way. Prepare for Him this path, of which is written: *Make straight his path*.

The voice cries: *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*. First the voice strikes upon the ear, then after the voice, indeed together with the voice, the word penetrates the mind. In this way was Christ announced by John. Let us then hear what the Voice announces concerning the Word. *Prepare ye*, it says, *the way of the Lord.* Which way shall we prepare for the Lord? A way on the earth? Can the Word of God travel such a road? Or rather must we not prepare the way within us, setting up in our hearts a straight and true way?

This is the way through which the Word of God enters, and comes to rest within the bounds of the human body. And