

The Upper Room^[1] devotional reflection for Tuesday, January 12, 2021 comes to us from M. J. George of Indiana

Matthew 3:1-12 1 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" 4 John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

"A Remarkable Opportunity"

In the 1970s, one winter afternoon after classes, I hurried to Moscow's State Tretyakov Gallery to study a painting entitled *Appearance of Christ to the People* by Alexander Ivanov. My plan was to sit alone and reflect on the life-sized masterpiece, but a young stranger soon joined me on the bench. "Can you explain it?" he asked.

"The setting is 2000 years ago," I began. I went on to point out the Roman soldiers on horses and John the Baptist holding a staff near the Jordan River. I explained that John was calling people to repent because God was sending a Messiah to save them. "In the distance we see Jesus Christ approaching. Though he never sinned, he will persuade John to baptize him. The story is in the Bible."

"Have you ever seen a Bible?" the young man asked. I pulled a small Russian Bible from my handbag, opened it to Matthew 3, and with a silent prayer watched him read.

"Filled with wonder, I realized that God offers us opportunities in our daily encounters to meet people who need to hear about Jesus.

-- M. J. George

Prayer Focus: Christians in Russia

Prayer: Dear God, help us to share your word with people who cross our path every day. Amen

Thought for the Day: Interruptions are often opportunities from God.

Friends –

I really like how this Thought for the Day interprets this reflection. I can't begin to count the times that I have been interrupted in a holy way that gives me the opportunity to be of service, share a thoughtful reflection, offer hope from my own faith, or somehow become a blessing to someone, knowing that I am also a blessing from God.

Can you think of Holy Interruptions in your life?

--Pastor bea

¹ <https://www.upperroom.org/>