

Cycle A – Third Sunday of Advent, December 11, 2022

“What did you go out to see? ...”

OPENING PRAYER (Psalm 146)

Leader: It is the Lord who keeps faith forever,
who gives justice to the oppressed;
and food to the hungry.

All: The Lord sets the prisoners free.
The Lord opens the eyes of the blind
and lifts those who are bowed down;

Leader: The Lord loves the righteous
and watches over the strangers.
The Lord upholds the orphan and the widow.

All: But the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.
The Lord will reign forever,
for all generations. Amen



First Reading – Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10

Isaiah’s evocative words continue to paint for us a picture of the beauty and healing when God’s grace rules creation. Last week we heard about peace between animals and humans. This week we hear of a flowering in unlikely places like the desert and the wilderness, followed by physical healing for people. This vision of physical flowering and restoration is completed by a political resolution as the people in exile return to their homeland.

1. What image in this reading speaks most strongly to you?
2. How can Advent become a time of restoration and healing as we prepare for Christmas?

Second Reading – James 5:7-10

Of all the words of promise and vision in the Advent readings, James adds the importance of patience. He alerts us to the example of the prophets who were patient and endured suffering as they announced God’s word to the people. John the Baptist clearly stands in this line of witnesses.

1. Who is your example of patience and endurance in time of suffering?
2. Were Jesus to return tomorrow, how would we spend today?

Gospel – Matthew 11:2-11

Last Sunday, we heard John the Baptist preach the coming of a strong Messiah who would restore order and punish evil people, and ensure that justice would prevail. Now Jesus has arrived, and John has doubts while in prison, so he asks Jesus the question: “Are you the one?” Jesus points to what is happening: healing, new life and Good News proclaimed. But this is not what John had envisioned: that salvation is not punitive but salvific. Instead of judgment, Jesus announces God’s mercy. Instead of imposing a new world order, Jesus invites people into a new covenant that transforms their lives, and Jesus shows special care to the excluded and the suffering.

1. What do you learn in this reading about the relationship between John and Jesus?
2. How has your life been touched and transformed by Jesus and his message of God’s mercy?
3. What are the distinguishing marks of a prophet?

LIVING THE WORD

What is God’s challenge for me/us this coming week?

PRAYING THE WORD

Intercession: For the oppressed, the hungry, the chained, the blind, the strangers and all those bowed down, may our active charity be the expression of your presence in the heart of their pain.
We pray to the Lord.

Invite other intentions, ending with “Our Father ...”

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: God our Father we implore you. See our blind eyes: enlighten them

All: Emmanuel, we implore you. See our deaf ears: open them.

Leader: Spirit of God, we implore you. See our mute mouths: let them shout your praise.

All: Make the desert of our hearts blossom again and fill us with rejoicing and singing.

Leader: Let us share with one another a sign of peace: a peace the world cannot give.