

Advent 3 Year C

Readings: *Zephaniah 3:14-20, Philippians 4:4-7, Luke 3:7-18, Canticle Isaiah 12:2-6*

Theme: Joyful waiting.

"The Lord your God is in your midst, He will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in Love."

In the Name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

My dear friends, it is now the third Sunday of our preparation for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today again we hear the voice of John the Baptist. What is the message for us today and does the Church want us to continue this preparation?

In the first reading, we hear the voice of the prophet Zephaniah declaring to the people of God that the Lord is coming to take away the heavy burden they have and to grant them victory. He will renew his Love for them and bring them home in safety. The prophet gives us a picture of God which shows how things might be. God would like to be among his people as a judge who acquits a warrior who fights his battles. He is the God of joy.

In the second reading, Paul asked the Philippians to rejoice always. This joy is to be rooted in the fact that they know that the Lord is near. Through this knowledge, Paul endured his imprisonment and they too would survive in the hostile society around them. They were to share their lives with the Lord, thankful for the past, asking him for what they needed in the future. Their protection was the peace of God given through Christ. Now that they are in Christ, they are a new creation. This is similar to the voice heard in Zephaniah. He asked them not to worry about things but to concentrate in praying and thanksgiving to the Lord.

In the Gospel, we hear how the public preaching of John the Baptist was received. The religious authorities ignored him. Among those who were asking what they were to do were the crowd, the tax collectors and the soldiers. These same crowds later hung on to the words of Jesus. John's message did not

demand increased sacrificial worship in the Temple, but asked for a proper sharing of resources and an end to extortion and intimidation. He asked people to do their best in whatever situation they find themselves. It is not enough to go to the Temple everyday only to neglect the duty assigned to you. His preaching was so powerful that people thought he was the Messiah.

He did what he could to refute this claim - stating that the one to come was far greater than he was and was going to do greater things. Many were convinced by his Preaching. They acknowledged their sinfulness and, as a sign of their sincerity, underwent a ritual cleansing in the waters of the Jordan.

John the Baptist is a fitting role model as we prepare in Advent to the coming of the Lord. All the readings of today emphasised on this nearness of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The advice he gave to the people he baptised who asked for guidance as to what they must do to prepare for the coming of the Lord is applicable to us today. His words are directly spoken to us.

Jesus is asking today reminds all of us of our professional responsibilities as public servants and cautions us to carry out our daily work with honesty, integrity and concern. We must not display raw power and we must be willing to share with the less well off.

John the Baptist stands before us, an Israelite who kept the promise of the Messiah alive in people's hearts. He calls us to give a practical expression to his message by joyful hope for the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are joyful because our God is among us and he has come to save us. According to today's readings, there is no reason to live our lives devoid of joy.

At this time, we return to the deep well of God's grace to encounter again the gifts we have received. The lighting of the Advent candle sheds some light in the darker areas of our lives. This is the reason for the joy that is our today.

May the rest of the Advent season bring you closer to God and his Son Jesus Christ.

Amen.