

rejoice!

The third Sunday of Advent is also known as "gaudete," the Latin word for "rejoice." It takes its name from the words of our epistle lesson today (Philippians 4:4-7), part of which was traditionally sung on the third Sunday of Advent when we are preparing for the impending joy of the celebration of the Incarnation. This is the day when the rose colored candle on the advent wreath is lit, and in some places rose colored vestments are used.

Of course, nothing says "Christmas is coming" and "rejoice!" quite like John the Baptist calling people who are seeking baptism a "brood of vipers"... This passage from the Gospel of Luke shows the foundational role that sharing has in the kingdom of God. Those who have plenty are to share with those who don't have enough. This is a common theme in Luke's writings, and honestly, it's a core message of our celebration of Christmas. To not share puts you in the company of the vipers and the trees with axes sat at their base.

The Hebrew Bible lesson is from the book of the Prophet Zephaniah, a contemporary of Jeremiah's who spoke the word of God during a time of great turmoil. In this lesson (Zephaniah 3:14-20), he calls God's people who are about to undergo a great tragedy that they should "rejoice," for God is with them, and will one day bring them home.

Call and Response

Surely, it is God who saves me;
I will trust in him and not be afraid.

For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense,
and he will be my Savior.

Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing
from the springs of salvation.

And on that day you shall say,
Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;

Make his deeds known among the peoples;
see that they remember that his Name is exalted.

Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things,
and this is known in all the world.

(Adapted from Isaiah 12)

Discussion and Question

Our Gospel lesson this week is all about sharing. John the Baptist is asked by the crowds what they need to do to be saved by God, and he tells them to share. What does this mean to you? What should we share? Why do you think this is so important?

Prayer

O God, may our hearts be filled with expectation, and may our lives be filled with rejoicing. Let our gentleness be known to everyone. Let us forget about worry and anxiety, but keep our minds busy with prayer and thanksgiving. And may your peace, which passes all understanding guard us day by day and night by night in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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