



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle A

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“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” Matthew 11:3

There are three distinct literary forms in this Gospel for the third Sunday of Advent: poem, instruction and story. There’s poetry in the way Jesus speaks of John, “*A reed shaken by the wind?*” Clear instruction, “*blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.*” And the retelling by the Gospel evangelists a memorized story of a specific historical event, passed down to them from oral tradition. The telling of this event gives us spiritual inspiration and historical insight for this third Sunday of Advent. We are instructed to emulate John the Baptist this Advent. We are to be like John the Baptist and prepare the way for the coming of Jesus with determination and hope.

We should be prepared for some level of persecution and suffering for being truly Christian. Perhaps not as severe as imprisonment, but in today’s secular culture, we’ll have to endure something less than immediate and universal acceptance. But Jesus’ praise of John and his confirmation of the signs of the approaching kingdom of God give us the strength to take on John as our model for suffering hardships, just as James advised us in the second reading.

There is elation in Jesus’ voice as he points out that Isaiah's predictions are coming true. And there is gentle instruction in his observations about the kind of person John is and why he is so great.

Jesus shows no anger when he hears that John has been imprisoned. In the same way, when we face persecution for telling the Jesus story, we should in no way fall into the snare of anger or disappointment. John's fate is an example of living out the life of a true disciple. Raising our hearts and minds as he did toward the mystical heavens, we join the angels and saints in praising the thrice-holy God. Like the holy Christians that passed before us, we will be filled with the joy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In the last two verses Jesus affirms our Christian endeavors for doing our part for the inbreaking of the kingdom of God here on earth. Inspiring others was John's true greatness. As we are inspired, may we impart the inspiration of the truth of the Gospel message, and look forward to someday joining the parade of saints eternally proclaiming God’s glory.

“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” We hear in this question what we feel as the deepest desire of our hearts. *“Let not your hearts be troubled.” John 14:1* As we quiet our troubled hearts, our spiritual connection to Christ answers the jarring questions of every generation. This opens hearts to the goodness of creation, and awakens in our senses the truth of salvation.

*We shall go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,
and come home with shouts of joy, bringing in the harvest. (Ps 126:6)*

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, *“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”*

Jesus answered them,

“Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.”

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John:

“What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,

*‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.’*

Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

The Gospel of the Lord