

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice.  
Indeed, the Lord is near.

**COLLECT**

O God, who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity, enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

**FIRST READING**

Zep 3:14-18

A reading from the prophet Zephaniah  
Shout for joy, daughter of Zion,  
Israel, shout aloud!  
Rejoice, exult with all your heart,  
daughter of Jerusalem!  
The Lord has repealed your sentence;  
he has driven your enemies away.  
The Lord, the king of Israel, is in your midst;  
you have no more evil to fear.  
When that day comes, word will come to  
Jerusalem:  
Zion, have no fear,  
do not let your hands fall limp.  
The Lord your God is in your midst,  
a victorious warrior.  
He will exult with joy over you,  
he will renew you by his love;  
he will dance with shouts of joy for you  
as on a day of festival.  
The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM**

Is 12:2-6

Response:

**Sing and shout for joy for great in your midst  
is the Holy One of Israel.**

1. Truly, God is my salvation,  
I trust, I shall not fear.  
For the Lord is my strength, my song,  
he became my saviour.  
With joy you will draw water  
from the wells of salvation. **(R.)**
2. Give thanks to the Lord, give praise to his  
name!  
Make his mighty deeds known to the  
peoples!  
Declare the greatness of his name. **(R.)**
3. Sing a psalm to the Lord  
for he has done glorious deeds,  
make them known to all the earth!  
People of Zion, sing and shout for joy,  
for great in your midst is the Holy One of  
Israel. **(R.)**

**SECOND READING**

Phil 4:4-7

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the  
Philippians  
I want you to be happy, always happy in the  
Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness. Let  
your tolerance be evident to everyone: the Lord  
is very near.  
There is no need to worry; but if there is  
anything you need, pray for it, asking God for  
it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace  
of God, which is so much greater than we can

understand, will guard your hearts and your  
thoughts, in Christ Jesus.

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Alleluia, alleluia! The spirit of the Lord has  
been given to me.  
He has sent me to bring the good news to the  
poor. Alleluia!**

**GOSPEL**

Lk 3:10-18

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
Luke  
When all the people asked John, 'What must we  
do?' he answered, 'If anyone has two tunics he  
must share with the man who has none, and the  
one with something to eat must do the same.'  
There were tax collectors too who came for  
baptism, and these said to him, 'Master, what  
must we do?' He said to them, 'Exact no more  
than your rate.' Some soldiers asked him in their  
turn, 'What about us? What must we do?' He  
said to them, 'No intimidation! No extortion! Be  
content with your pay!'  
A feeling of expectancy had grown among the  
people, who were beginning to think that John  
might be the Christ, so John declared before  
them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone  
is coming, someone who is more powerful  
than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of  
his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy  
Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand  
to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the  
wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn  
in a fire that will never go out.' As well as this,  
there were many other things he said to exhort  
the people and to announce the Good News to  
them.

The Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

**I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.  
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with  
the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
(all bow during the next three lines)  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the  
Virgin Mary,  
and became man.  
For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,**

**who with the Father and the Son is adored  
and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**I believe in one, holy, catholic and  
apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness  
of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the  
dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

May the sacrifice of our worship, Lord, we pray,  
be offered to you unceasingly,  
to complete what was begun in sacred mystery  
and powerfully accomplish for us your saving  
work.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

**Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not  
fear.  
Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

We implore your mercy, Lord,  
that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of  
our faults  
and prepare us for the coming feasts.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

Time always seems long to the child who  
is waiting - for Christmas, for next summer,  
for becoming a grownup: long also when he  
surrenders his whole soul to each moment of a  
happy day.

*Dag Hammarskjöld*

# Sunday Message

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE WORD

Year C • 15 December 2024 • Colour: Rose or Violet • Psalter Week 3

## TO POINT TOWARDS JESUS

LK 3:10-18



As we move closer to Christmas the excitement and anticipation is growing.

In our families and in the work place Christmas may well have already arrived with parties and nativity plays in full swing. It is hard to hold onto this precious time of preparation. This is not new. People were so excited by the way John the Baptist spoke that they almost stopped hearing what he had to say and began to think that he was the messiah.

The first reading echoes this excitement, as Zephaniah announces the imminent arrival of the one who will bring love and joy to Israel.

The Baptist is anxious to curb the enthusiasm of those who are beginning to think he is the messiah. He knows only too well that he is merely an instrument of God, whose job is to proclaim the arrival of the Good News. In fact, he is not even worthy to undo the sandal of the one who is coming.

Like John the Baptist, our task also is to point towards Jesus. ■

### DO

Reflect on the times when you elevate yourself or believe that what you have to do is more important than putting Jesus first.

### SAY

**"Lord, let me decrease so that you may increase in me. Amen."**

### LEARN

The Christian always points towards Christ

Today is known as Gaudete Sunday, meaning 'rejoice,' from the first word of the entrance antiphon

The Christian always speaks truth to power

### PRAY

Pray for all who work in any form of religious ministry that their lives will truly witness to Christ and bring others closer to him.

### REFLECT

John the Baptist teaches us several lessons. The first is about the need to be authentic. When John began to preach, people flocked to him from everywhere, impressed by his words, his charisma, his message. Even the upper classes came to him. It must have been tempting for John to feel like a celebrity, a kind of messiah. But he resists. He is constantly at pains to push the focus away from himself. He has no desire to be the centre of attention. "Someone greater is coming after me," he says, "and I'm not fit to carry his sandals."

The people see him as a prophet, but John is no narcissist. He's not interested in fame or appearances. He remains his authentic self.

Some years ago, a young American commentator Jia Tolentino published an essay entitled 'Always be Optimising.' It's about the pressure women feel to look good, be attractive, skinny, appealing. The need to always be optimising; in other words, to never be satisfied with their appearance. It's not only women who feel this pressure. Young men feel it increasingly too.

Today's world pressurises us to be seen as successful, with a rewarding career and good income, a perfect family and a nice

house. To always be optimising. Social media, with its obsession with looks and money and celebrity, makes being your authentic self even harder. Image trumps integrity, honesty, authenticity.

And this pressure costs. It can eat into our self-esteem. We can become damaged, dispirited, disappointed. We forget that God created us in God's own image and likeness and God never creates failures. John the Baptist knew that. He always remained his authentic self. Authentic self-love is not selfish or narcissistic; it's never self-obsessed or egotistical. It's acknowledging the beauty and abilities we have in abundance, nurturing them, using them well. The Baptist urges us to be authentic.

Second, John the Baptist always pointed towards Jesus, and away from himself. Everything he said and did directed people towards Jesus. So it must be with us.

This is peak sales and marketing season. Huge sums will be spent creating memorable, heart-warming, advertisements, encouraging us to spend, spend, spend. John the Baptist reminds us that Christians are advertisers also. Our lives must be everyday advertisements for the Gospel, walking billboards that point to Christ, by the kind of people we are and the witness we give. Each of us, like the Baptist, must point to Jesus every day.

Third, John the Baptist challenges us to witness to our faith without fear. Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister says that our model must be both Jesus the healer and Jesus the prophet. The popular embrace of Jesus the healer, she says, has obscured the more radical Jesus, who challenged the status quo and religious leaders of his time.

"We live in an era that accepts half of what it means to follow Jesus," she says. "We want our religion in a spiritual Jacuzzi, a feel-good spiritual world."

She warns that we are at a time when huge choices must be made that will determine the future of the world. Choice takes three forms. The first is avoidance and to withdraw from the fray. The second is submission and passive acceptance, to not talk about religion or politics or justice and "become part of the great enabling silence." The third is to be prophetic, to refuse to accept the status quo. This prophetic choice says 'no' to anything that ignores the will of God or God's creation.

John the Baptist chose option number three - to be prophetic. He called out injustice, he challenged people to change their ways. He was martyred for it. Like the Baptist, we also must be courageous witnesses to the truth, whatever the consequences. ■