

Third Sunday of Advent(year C) December 15, 2024

Introduction of themes for the Day and Season

The third Sunday of Advent is often called the Joy Sunday—some churches even have a pink Advent Candle to mark the day. Rev Dr. Grace Ji-Sun Kim is a professor and teacher whose life is shaped by joy. She says Joy is not about what we do, it's about what God does—therefore instead of us finding joy, joy finds us.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

Gospel Luke 3:7-18 New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

7 John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **8** Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. **9** Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

10 And the crowds asked him, “What, then, should we do?” **11** In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise.” **12** Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” **13** He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” **14** Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

15 As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,^[a] **16** John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with^[b] the Holy Spirit and fire. **17** His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his

threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

18 So with many other exhortations he proclaimed the good news to the people.

Sermon

A monastery I visited a couple of times had a long- running joke among the monks. When they would see a guest approaching from the distance they’d mutter, “*Oh Jesus it’s you*”. The joke serves as a playful reminder to treat guests as if they were Jesus himself. One writer notes that Jesus as a guest often comes to us in the most distressing of disguises.

When the wild eyed, bug eating, name-calling John the Baptizer puts everyone on notice that God’s chosen one—Jesus—was near, people wanted to know how to act and how to receive him.

Share...if you have extra and someone has nothing share! Be fair...if you charge money for taxes or other stuff, don’t over charge. And you in-charge people; soldiers and guards and the like...don’t take other people’s money or possessions by force—be happy with what you get paid.

That’s it? We learned all that from our families and in kindergarten. What’s the big deal?

If you don’t have food or a warm place to be, it IS a big deal when someone shares.

If you don’t have very much, it IS a big deal that others treat you fairly and don’t bully you out of your lunch money.

Turns out it’s also a big deal for those who change their ways. The changed life isn’t about getting into God’s good books—it’s a sign that God’s goodness is finding its way into us. Maybe in the process, some of the chaffy stuff like greed and selfishness burns off and leaves behind kindness.

As Professor Grace Jin-Sun Kim says, joy is not about what we do. It’s about what God does. So maybe all those people John the Baptizer gives the what-for to are people just yearning and waiting for God to find them...and it just might be that once they’re found that’s when the sharing and being fair and just will start happening for them—and even as cranky old John says, that’s Good news for everyone.