

Gospel and Sermon Transcript -3rd Sunday in Advent - December 14, 2025

Shows up late, starts messing with the candles.

What is this deal?

I did want to see the pink candle today

because we light that one specially for this Sunday

of Advent, where we speak of joy.

If you want the Latin for it, Godetay Sunday, which literally means to rejoice.

I need to say something about that.

Most of you have read the newspapers already, haven't you?

And so you live in that world, you come to hear,

and you hear people talk about rejoice,

and you say, I don't see how this fits.

Well, many of us struggle with that.

And I am reminded of a quote from Frederick Beekner, who was a Presbyterian pastor and a writer and a storyteller, who says that happiness is that thing that

happens to you when circumstances are good.

Joy is that thing that happens to you when they're not.

And it comes to us unexpectedly.

That sounds pretty adventy to me when

we are asked to be alert and awake and mindful of the ways

that God shows up, even when circumstances would suggest something else.

So not only will we light a pink candle, we do have a bit of a change in the worship service.

And here's how that goes.

When we get to the song, Sheila Brown, our guest musician of the day, will be singing the Magnificat for us.

And some of you will recognize the melody from Holden Evening Prayer, Mary's Song of Joy.

So we probably should let you know that Lily is still dealing with this respiratory stuff that's going around.

So please be thinking of her today too and pray for her that she makes a full and swift recovery.

But thank you, Sheila, for braving.

How many little snow squalls did you hit in the 10 miles between here and Port Colburn?

I didn't hear anything.

Oh, really?

That was just me.

The weirdest thing.

I would drive for maybe 100 yards, if I can use yards.

There would be snow.

Then it would break.

Then it would start again.

It was just the weirdest thing.

And you ran into none.

Well, the sun literally smiled on you the whole week here.

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Matthew, the 11th chapter.

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing,

he sent word by his disciples and asked,

"Are you the one who is to come or are we to wait for another?"

And Jesus answered John, "Go and tell John what you hear and see.

The blind receive their sight, the lame walk.

Those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear.

The dead are raised and the poor shall have good news brought to them.

And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

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

What did you go out to 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,

none has arisen greater than John the Baptist.

Yet, the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

The gospel of our Lord.

The Sermon

What should we see here?

I give some peace to you from the one who was, who is, and who is to come.

There are many songs of joy in Luke's gospel.

Mary sings, Elizabeth sings, John the Baptizer's father, Zachariah sings,

Simeon and Anna.

There seems to be something in common with all of the lyrics.

And they go back a ways.

But they all have to do with everything being upended,

as you heard read in the scripture from the prophet Isaiah today.

Really?

The dead are raised?

Really, those who can't see, now see, those who can't hear, now hear,
those who cannot walk, walk?

Maybe you're more optimistic than I am.

But that's not something that we see happen.

It could be, I don't know if it's a North American thing,

I can tell you, south of the border where I grew up, it's a thing,
to be optimistic, to think positive,
to manifest even if you want to.

That doesn't work for me, but it may work for somebody.

But these things have limits.

They're eventually exhausted.

And I'm not sure that any amount of optimism is going to affect any of the
reversals

that are described in the Psalm or in the prophets,
or even in Jesus' own words, about John the Baptizer.

I mean, when things go our way, we're happy, sure.

And you know, when the maple leaves win the Stanley Cup, we would be happy.

It could happen.

I mean, they're professionals after all, and they play well.

I mean, they're fine.

But some of this other that we hear in the scriptures, that just is well beyond us.

And yet, these are the songs of joy that people like Mary sing about.

Fun fact.

Mary's name in Hebrew is Miriam.

Funner fact.

Is funner a word?

Okay, it is today, but thanks for cutting me some slack.

Yes, my English professor in the back is...

No help for him.

Funner fact.

Miriam means she rebels.

I love it.

Anybody remember Miriam's sister of Moses?

A protective older sister who sees to it that Moses is not part of the program of genocide

that is aimed against Hebrew people?

Miriam, she rebels and she is crafty.

She arranges it so that Moses is not only freed, but ends up growing up in the very privilege and luxury

of Pharaoh's own household.

Now, if that's not irony, I'm not sure what is.

If that's not a reversal, I'm not sure that I can find another.

But there's a song attributed to Miriam of events years and years later.

At Passover, when slave people running for their lives

managed to get just across the sea,

and the mightiest army of the day is tossed up on its head and swept over by the sea.

And so Miriam would sing, "Horse and rider are pitched into the sea,"

and she led her people singing in joy and in dancing at this more than unlikely event.

Mary, that young woman whom Gabriel approaches with news that she is carrying within her

the embodiment of God in the person of Jesus,

she probably knew a thing or two about Miriam, her spiritual ancestor.

She probably remembered the song of Hannah that spoke of one childless now who bears many children.

Young Miriam maybe knew something, I think plenty,

about how God shows up when really in human terms things are more than limited.

That God shows up in the unlikeliest of times doing the unlikeliest of things.

And what is God's end game anyway?

Is God just in the business of disturbing because it's amusing for the Almighty? Probably not.

But imagine this, the one who steps into the miasma of chaos and nothingness speaks forth life,

speaks forth order and beauty and creation.

And this same God who at the death of Jesus calls him forth from the dead back to life

is all about the great and grand reversals, the ones that really boggle the human imagination.

And as advent people traveling this patch that we travel,

I'm not asking that we believe the impossible or speak as my dad would have said as someone wearing a paper hat and a rainstorm.

Because there are things that happen that we cannot effect for ourselves that God does.

And this end game that we speak of, you get hints of it from the prophet, from Miriam's song,

and then the younger Miriam's song as she is told she is with child.

And it all comes to wholeness and healing and blessing.

Or as Miriam would have said in her language,

"A day will come when God brings in an era of shalom."