



Church At Home
St. Timothy's Lutheran Church – Pembroke, Ontario
Advent III **December 14, 2025**

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

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 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 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.

Homily

I greet you in the name of Jesus: the Gift of Joy! Amen.

The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally called "Gaudete" or "Rejoice" Sunday in the Christian calendar. In many churches, the penitential purple or blue of the season is put aside in favor of a lighter, happier rose, and the week's lectionary readings encourage hopefulness and joy. "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom," promises Isaiah. "Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God," declares the Psalmist in our appointed Psalm for today.

I don't know about you, but I find these calls to joy difficult. "Rejoice" is a churchy word I don't use in regular life, so I feel clumsy and hesitant around it. "Joy" itself is a word so overused in our commercialism of Christmas that it has become, would you say, almost trivial.

So, it's with a mixture of confusion that I wrestle with this Sunday's Gospel reading, which places me in a context quite different from Isaiah's blooming wilderness. Maybe God has an ironic sense of humor, or maybe the lectionary has a wisdom shrewder than I knew.

We have moved several chapters and several months from last week's reading where John is full of confidence and has a compelling call for repentance to finding us today in a prison cell, offering company to a broken-hearted John the Baptist.

Joy is not evident here behind the bars that hold the fiery Baptizer. Now sitting alone in a dark damp cell, John is in chains and in a crisis for speaking the hard truth to Herod. Prison gives anyone time to think; time to ponder. John is wondering if he has staked his life on the wrong promise and the wrong person and sends a disciple to go and ask Jesus a poignant, even heartbreaking question: Are you really the one who is to come, or should we look for another?

Doesn't this make sense? Fire and brimstone confidence turned to uncertainty and despair. Anticipation to disappointment. Hope to desperation. This move of John is not unfamiliar to us. We regularly charge ahead with our dreams and plans, marching forward with optimism about the future, only to be arrested and caught up short, whether by cancer or another disease, or loss of our job due to no fault of our own, or the unexpected death of a loved one, or the loss of a relationship or any of a hundred of things that causes us to suddenly stumble and lose our confidence and question our faith.

Perhaps that is why we need to hear this story on the third Sunday of Advent; when we light the pink candle of joy. The story supplies a small dose of reality in a season that is filled with manufactured cheeriness. For not everything is joyous in our tinsel town lives; not everyone is filled with joy. Life is quite different in the meantime. We anticipated the birth of the Christ child and we believe in his death and resurrection promises of new and eternal life yet it is in the meantime that we struggle with doubts and fears. And so in this picture of John the Baptist sharing his doubts can reassure and remind us that doubt is not the opposite of faith; it is a starting point for inquiry.

The in the meantime; between birth and death better known as life; it is a struggle at times. We often wonder where God is in our lives.

We want God to be a victorious conqueror over our trials and tribulations. Yet, that is not who God is as Matthew confesses. God, Jesus came to be among us as Emmanuel, "God with us", the one who does not eliminate our troubles but accompanies us through them; the one who holds onto us when the world feels like it's falling apart; the one who enters into our suffering and struggle and reminds us we are not alone; the one who promises to bring us through all things even through death to new life.

And here we wait. On this third Sunday of Advent we sit here in this sanctuary of St. Timothy's with each other and with Christians throughout the world waiting between the first advent of Jesus as a human child and his second advent in glory. Waiting can be hard.

Waiting is hard, but it is indeed a part of the Christian life. We not only wait during Advent, we also prepare. Oh yes, this means private preparation to "get right with the Lord"; repenting and turning ourselves to the God. It also means for us to act now to make St. Timothy's, and Pembroke, and Canada and for that matter the world more peaceful, more healthier, more just and more hopeful. This is the life and world God through Jesus desires for us.

What can be even harder is the collision of this festive season and the experience of personal loss or fear that many of us harbour. It is harder than hard; it is painful.

My friends in Christ. John's question to Jesus isn't simply a question; it's also a plea for understanding and reassurance. Jesus' answer to look to his deeds of mercy isn't only an answer to John's question but also a call to action, a call not just to John but also to all of us. It is a call that reminds us of God's promises of healing and peace and empowers us to work for them in the meantime.

So come today, in fact every Sunday when you can and bring your deep concerns and prayers and offer them to the One who loves us deeply and then go out again to work, struggle, and care offering to others through our words and deeds the healing and peace that comes from the God we know in Jesus. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you,
The Lord look upon you with favour and give you (+) peace. Amen.

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STTLC Communiqué

In Our Prayers Today.....

Mike Harrington, Lila Martinat, Irlavere Tubbe, Bobby Keuhl, Adele Krieger, Tracy Schori, and Christa Reitlingshoefer.

Poinsettia Plants for Christmas – Those wishing to donate towards the purchase of poinsettias to adorn the chancel area and Jubilee Hall, please contact the church office by Monday, December 15th and mark your donation "Poinsettia" on your offering envelope. Thank you for your consideration.

Christmas Eve Services this year are at 4:00 and 7:00 pm.

The 2026 Offering Envelopes are available at the back of the church. If you can deliver any, please do so. Thank you.

Year-end Donations – last day for offerings and/or donations to be received and to be credited to 2025 taxation year is Sunday, December 28th.