

# Third Sunday of Advent

*Sunday, December 16, 2018*

Year (cycle): C

## The Collect:

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

## Old Testament:

Zephaniah 3:14-20

<sup>14</sup> Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;  
shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
O daughter Jerusalem!

<sup>15</sup> The Lord has taken away the judgements against you,  
he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;  
you shall fear disaster no more.

<sup>16</sup> On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:  
Do not fear, O Zion;  
do not let your hands grow weak.

<sup>17</sup> The Lord, your God, is in your midst,  
a warrior who gives victory;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness,  
he will renew you in his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing  
<sup>18</sup> as on a day of festival.

I will remove disaster from you,  
so that you will not bear reproach for it.

<sup>19</sup> I will deal with all your oppressors  
at that time.

And I will save the lame  
and gather the outcast,  
and I will change their shame into praise  
and renown in all the earth.

<sup>20</sup> At that time I will bring you home,  
at the time when I gather you;

for I will make you renowned and praised  
among all the peoples of the earth,  
when I restore your fortunes  
before your eyes, says the Lord.

**Psalm:**

**Canticle 9 -- The First Song of Isaiah (Isaiah 12:2-6)**

Surely, it is God who saves me; \*

I will trust in him and not be afraid.

For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, \*  
and he will be my Savior.

Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing \*  
from the springs of salvation.

And on that day you shall say, \*

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;

Make his deeds known among the peoples; \*

see that they remember that his Name is exalted.

Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things, \*  
and this is known in all the world.

Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy, \*

for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel.

**Epistle:**

**Philippians 4:4-7**

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**Gospel:**

**Luke 3:7-18**

<sup>7</sup>John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup>Bear fruits worthy of repentance. 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. <sup>9</sup>Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'

<sup>10</sup> And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' <sup>11</sup> In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' <sup>12</sup> Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' <sup>13</sup> He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' <sup>14</sup> 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.'

<sup>15</sup> As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, <sup>16</sup> 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 thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> 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.'

<sup>18</sup> So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

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Today is Gaudete Sunday or rejoicing Sunday. It gives us a break from the penitential practices of Advent. We joyfully note the things that we can anticipate, not the things not yet done, as a way to prepare for Christmas. It gives us the change to celebrate the coming of our Lord.

This may be translated as: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice. Let your forbearance be known to all, for the Lord is near at hand; have no anxiety about anything, but in all things, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God. Lord, you have blessed your land; you have turned away the captivity of Jacob." [Philippians](#) 4:4–6; [Psalm 85 \(84\):1](#)

Rose is the liturgical color for today – so today is also called Rose Sunday. Rose replaces blue on this Sunday to emphasize the opportunity to rejoice, take that break from the focus on things left undone. "Liturgical Colors" in Episcopal worship signify our place in the Church Year: WHITE, the color of Jesus' burial garments, for Christmas, Easter, and other 'feasts' or festival days, as well as marriages and funerals.

PURPLE/VIOLET for Advent (or ROYAL BLUE) & Lent (or UNBLEACHED LINEN). RED is used in Holy Week, the Day of Pentecost, and at ordinations.

GREEN is used during Epiphany and the 'Ordinary Time' after Pentecost Sunday. The colors are displayed on the altar frontal, and the hangings from the pulpit and lectern, as well as the vestments worn by the clergy. There may be just a little teasing of the male clergy on their level of comfort in the rose vestments. You may notice that there is one rose candle in the Advent wreath as well.

Alleluia or Halleluiah are included in the hymns on this Sunday. It gives all of us a chance to think forward to the celebrations to come. There is a similar Sunday in Lent, about half way through, that breaks up that penitential season as well.

The readings provide the same joyful message, with the exception of our friend John the Baptist. The Old Testament prophet, Zephaniah lived in a time of constant fear. Never knowing when he might be killed for his beliefs and his status as a prophet, he still found joy in serving God. He pronounces God's forgiveness to the people of Israel. Everything lost will be restored. The lame will be healed, shame will be taken away, all will be well.

The psalm reminds of our place as the beloved of God. We are given a safe and joyful place to live under the protection of a loving God. Confession time, I used to

sing this psalm on my way to exams. The message gives confidence in our status as the beloved. Paul tells us that we have nothing to fear. We are to rejoice in God always.

But what does it mean to be joyful? Does it mean we are happy? When we are happy, there is an external influence. We passed an exam, got a raise, our family is at peace. But to be joyful, is more internal. We can choose to be joyful, even in dire circumstances. I have met many people who are poor by any standard, or very ill, or have worries about their children or spouses, yet they are filled with joy. They aren't "happy" with the way their lives are going, but they have chosen joy over sorrow. They offer to help others when they have so many needs themselves.

I have a friend that needed her roof repaired and a more reliable car, but gave money and shelter to a young woman with two children postponing caring for her own needs. She shrugs off offers for help, and accolades for her generosity. She cares for her grandchildren and other family members, giving most of her free time outside her full-time job. She is a model of generosity and one who has chosen joy.

While we focus on our redemption through grace in our readings, and John the Baptists gives a clear pronouncement of the imminent coming of the savior. All of this is a transforming, joyful message that we are truly and unconditionally loved.

John gives his penitents direction on how they must live to transform their lives going forward after their baptisms.

Tax collectors and soldiers are considered the lowest of the low. Tax collectors are Jews that work for the Romans, and pad their own pockets by over charging and taking the excess. Working for the Romans is bad enough, but getting rich by taking more than their due from their fellow Jews is abhorrent. And the soldiers are foreigners, hired by the Romans as an occupying force. They are admonished to stop bullying and taking from the Jews. It is consistent with living right with others. Use the material goods and riches with generosity and fairness.

We at Trinity are in a time of transformation and transition. I am so joyful to be among you as we go forward. There are material changes downstairs. The rector's office is refinished, and there will be some other changes taking place in there. The nursery and church school rooms are being cleaned out, and plans are being made to make that space useful. We now have materials for a meaningful time, and will be working on having a curriculum, for children who would like to attend church school.

The furniture that needs repair is getting that attention, and other things that we cannot use are being repurposed. We are looking at other repairs and improvements to our building and our signage. Everyone is invited to join in.

The words of Paul today conclude with one of the most familiar blessings: <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.