



LIVING THE GOSPEL



**3rd Sunday of Advent
14 Dec 2025**

**Theme: "Behold I am sending my messenger ahead of you;
he will prepare your way before you."**

Gathering Prayer

All: 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, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Matthew 11:2-11

² John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, ³ 'Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?' ⁴ Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; ⁵ the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; ⁶ and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.' ⁷ As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? ⁸ Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. ⁹ Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: ¹⁰ he is the one of whom scripture says: 'Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you. ¹¹ I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.'

Gospel Focus

As we reached the halfway point of Advent, the readings for today seem less focused on preparation and more on enduring the wait. God is coming, but not quite yet. John the Baptist, seen last week as a fiery preacher, seems particularly impatient-is Jesus the expected Messiah or is he not? This week is an invitation to re-engage with Advent, regardless how we've done thus far. Proclaiming these readings, we get to remind the congregation that we still have (almost) two weeks of Advent left, even if their minds are already on Christmas. On the other hand, we also get to reassure them that God will arrive in time, even if God seems far off at the moment. The season of Advent holds both of these truths together-the fullness of God's kingdom is coming, but it's also not quite here yet. For now, we wait, but God will be here soon enough.

Gospel Reflection

There comes a time in most everyone's life when you wonder whether all the hard work and all the commitments are worth anything. Are you really making any difference in the world? Have you done with your life what you had hoped? Are you missing out on opportunities that may have passed by? That seems to be John the Baptist's frame of mind in today's gospel. He is in prison and his days are numbered. He had taken up a prophetic lifestyle, fasting, praying, calling people to repentance, preparing the way and watching for the Coming One. Was he right?

John sends his disciples to ask Jesus, who points to all the signs that John's preaching was right on target. Through Jesus' ministry, to which John pointed, people who could not previously do so are now seeing, walking, and hearing. Many are healed and restored to life. Poor people are heartened with good news. All the soil so carefully tilled and tended by John in bearing the long-awaited fruit. Was he expecting something else? Jesus says to the crowds that John was "more than a prophet," and that there has been "none greater than John the Baptist." Presumably, this assurance has also been conveyed to John, giving him heart to be able to quell the doubts and to endure patiently to the end.

Jesus then poses a forthright question to the crowds. Three times he asks why they went out to the desert and what they were expecting to see there. If they were looking for a prophet, not only have they seen the greatest of prophet, but they themselves are now called to exceed what John accomplished. How are the "least in the kingdom of heaven" supposed to surpass the greatest prophet? The readings today set forth attitudes that are essential for this.

The first reading invites us to be filled with joy and gladness, and to express this in singing and rejoicing, even when all seems desolate. The exiles had yet to see the concrete signs of restoration. Even before experiencing the anticipated healing and rebuilding, they were to enter into the ruined city singing for joy. This is not a naive refusal to see things as they are, but an expression of hope that springs from a deep conviction that God's saving deeds in the past will be manifest in the present and future as well, for those who have eyes to see. The very expectations that the parched wasteland will yield fragrant blooms begins to bring it into being.

While waiting the fulfilment of our expectations and longings, the letter of James exhorts us to be patient. Just as Jesus helped John's disciples to see the evidence of God's saving presence in their midst, so James urges us to look for the sprouts of hope that spring up even in the most parched desert. Expecting to see the desert bloom-or roses in December, as did Juan Diego, whom we remembered on the feast of our Lady of Guadalupe last Tuesday-we keep hope alive with patient endurance even in the midst of suffering and doubt.

New Testament links

First Reading — Is 35:1-6, 10

¹ Let the wilderness and the dry-lands exult, let the wasteland rejoice and bloom,² let it bring forth flowers like the jonquil, let it rejoice and sing for joy. The glory of Lebanon is bestowed on it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God.³ Strengthen all weary hands, steady all trembling knees ⁴ and say to all faint hearts, 'Courage! Do not be afraid. 'Look, your God is coming, vengeance is coming, the retribution of God; he is coming to save you.' ⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed, ⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy...

...¹⁰ for those the Lord has ransomed shall return. They will come to Zion shouting for joy, everlasting joy on their faces; joy and gladness will go with them and sorrow and lament be ended.

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 10

R: Come, Lord, and save us.

It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever, who is just to those who are oppressed.
It is he who gives bread to the hungry, the Lord, who sets prisoners free. **(R)**

It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind, who raises up those who are bowed down,
the Lord, who protects the stranger and upholds the widow and orphan. **(R)**

It is the Lord who loves the just but thwarts the path of the wicked.
The Lord will reign for ever, Zion's God, from age to age. **(R)**

Second Reading — Jas 5:7-10

⁷ Be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming. Think of a farmer: how patiently he waits for the precious fruit of the ground until it has had the autumn rains and the spring rains! ⁸ You too have to be patient; do not lose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon. ⁹ Do not make complaints against one another, brothers, so as not to be brought to judgement yourselves; the Judge is already to be seen waiting at the gates. ¹⁰ For your example, brothers, in submitting with patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

548. The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him. (Cf. *Jn* 5:36; 10:25, 38.) To those who turn to him in faith, he grants what they ask. (Cf. *Mk* 5:25-34; 10:52; etc) So miracles strengthen faith in the One who does his Father's works; they bear witness that he is the Son of God. (Cf. *Jn* 10:31-38.) But his miracles can also be occasions for "offense"; (*Mt* 11:6.) they are not intended to satisfy people's curiosity or desire for magic. Despite his evident miracles some people reject Jesus; he is even accused of acting by the power of demons. (Cf. *Jn* 11:47-48; *Mk* 3:22.)

549. By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness and death, (Cf. *Jn* 6:5-15; *Lk* 19:8; *Mt* 11:5.) Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless, he did not come to abolish all evils here below, (Cf. *Lk* 12 13-14; *Jn* 18:36.) but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of human bondage. (Cf. *Jn* 8:34-36.)

2443. God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them: "Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you"; "you received without pay, give without pay." (*Mt* 5:42; 10:8.) It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones. (Cf. *Mt* 25:31-36.) When "the poor have the good news preached to them," it is the sign of Christ's presence. (*Mt* 11:5; cf. *Lk* 4:18)

Sharing and Discussion

1. John sent his disciples to ask Jesus, ³ 'Are you the one who is to come? Do the pictures you carry of God keep you from noticing Christ's gentle presence in the ordinary moments of your life?'"
2. One of John the Baptist's tasks was to be the Lord's messenger. How can you continue that ministry?
3. "James speaks of waiting like a farmer waiting for rain. What are you waiting for in your life right now—and how is this waiting shaping your heart and your faith?"

Closing Prayer

All: Loving God, listen to the prayers we share and answer them accordingly to your will. We ask this through that same Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen