

THIRD Sunday of Advent

Gospel Reading

16th December 2018

John the Baptist teaches the path of repentance and announces Christ. **Luke 3: 10-18**

This Sunday's Gospel continues last week's focus on John the Baptist and his role in preparing the way for Christ. Recall that last week's reading described John's appearance in the desert and established his connection with the prophetic tradition of Israel.

If we were to read Luke's Gospel continuously, we would learn about John the Baptist challenging the crowds who came to him and calling upon them to show evidence of their repentance. John tells his listeners that they cannot rely on their lineage as Israelites because children of Abraham can be raised up from stones. Repentance, rather, must be observable in one's actions. Here, Luke is continuing to set up two important themes of his Gospel message: the Christian faith is expressed in one's actions, and the call to salvation is extended to everyone, Jews and Gentiles.

In today's Gospel reading, the crowds ask John the Baptist for specifics. What evidence of repentance is required? John replies by naming concrete actions: crowds should share their food and cloaks; tax collectors should be just; soldiers should act fairly. The concern for justice is a hallmark of Luke's Gospel.

When the crowd begins to wonder if John the Baptist might be the Messiah, John interprets his baptism and makes it clear that his ministry is in preparation for the Messiah.

John the Baptist knows his place and role in God's plan of salvation. By encouraging the crowd to act similarly in accordance with their stations in life, John's teaching suggests that each person has a role to play in God's

salvation. It is the great mystery of our salvation that God permits and even asks for human cooperation in his divine plans.

The third Sunday of Advent is also called Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete is a Latin word that means "rejoice." This name is taken from the entrance antiphon for Sunday's Mass, which is also echoed in today's second reading from the Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Some people mark this Sunday by lighting a pink candle instead of a purple one on their Advent wreath.

It is a reminder that the Advent season is a season of joy because our salvation is already at hand.

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