

John the Baptist and the Coming of God 3rd Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Isaiah 35:1-6, 10—The Coming of God and the New Exodus

1. Creation Rejoices: “they shall see the glory of our Lord”
2. Coming of God: “God” (Hebrew *Elohim*) will come and save his people
3. Signs of God’s Coming:
 - a. Blind → See
 - b. Deaf → Hear
 - c. Lame → Walk
 - d. Mute → Sing for joy
- [4. New Exodus: waters and a “highway” in the desert (Isa 35:8-9; omitted)]
5. Ingathering to Jerusalem: those “ransomed” will return to Zion

Psalm 146—Lord, Come and Save Us

1. The Lord “keeps faith for forever” and sets “prisoners free” (vv. 7-8)
2. The Lord “opens the eyes of the blind” (v. 8)
3. The Lord watches over the immigrant, widow, and orphan (vv. 9)
4. The Kingdom of God: “the LORD will reign forever” (v. 10)

James 5:7-10—The Coming of the Lord is at Hand

1. Be patient, until the “coming” (Greek *parousia*) of the Lord
2. Analogy of the Farmer: who waits with “patience” for the fruit
3. Avoid Accusation: “grumbling” against one another
4. Patience of “the prophets” who waited for God (waited for *centuries!*)

Matthew 11:2-11— “Are You He Who Is to Come?”

1. Context: John the Baptist imprisoned by Herod; hears of the deeds of “the Christ”
2. John’s Question: “Are You *He Who is To Come*?”
3. Jesus’ Answer to John: Old Testament background
 - a. The Blind See, the Lame Walk, Deaf Hear (cf. Isaiah 35)
 - b. Lepers are Cleansed (cf. 2 Kings 5:7)
 - c. The Dead are Raised Up (cf. Isaiah 26)
 - d. The Poor have “good news” preached to them (cf. Isaiah 61)
4. John the Baptist: “More than a prophet”
 - a. The “messenger” who comes before “the LORD” (Mal 3:1-2)
 - b. “No one” born “greater than John the Baptist” (!)

The Living Tradition and the Liturgy

Cornelius A. Lapide, SJ (16th cent. A.D.): Christ... here calls John the greatest of all men... This must be understood of the worthies of the Old Testament, that is to say, of all time prior to Christ... [For] he was sent by God to be Christ’s precursor and the friend of the Bridegroom, so that he might show Him to the whole world and testify that He is the

The Mass Readings Explained

Messiah and only Son of God; this office and dignity far surpasses all the offices and dignities of the prophets. (*The Great Commentary on Matt 11:11*).

Communion Rite: “Behold, the Lamb of God, behold who takes away the sins of the world” (cf. John 1:29)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (3rd Sunday of Advent, Year A)

1. If you asked most people the question, “What were the Jewish people waiting for in the first century A.D.”? the answer you will get is: “They were waiting for an earthly, political Messiah to come and set them free from the Roman empire.” But is that what Isaiah 35 describes?

2. Do you think John the Baptist’s question to Jesus suggests that he had doubts about Jesus’ divine identity? If so, why? If not, why do you think John instructed his disciples to ask Jesus: “Are you He Who Is To Come”?

3. At what moment in the liturgy does the Priest speak the words of John the Baptist? Why does the Priest speak the words of John when he is acting *in persona Christi*?

For Further Reading in the Catechism

1. St. John the Baptist: his mission and message (CCC 717-720)
2. St. John the Baptist and Advent Preparations (CCC 523-524)
3. The Second Coming of Christ (CCC 668-682)