

St Pius & St Anthony 3rd Sunday Advent 2025 (C)

Understandably, the crowds ask John, “What should we do?” John had been preaching on earlier in Luke chapter 3; we heard it in last week’s gospel, John preaching about their (our) need to convert, to repent (prepare) for the Messiah is coming. God is visiting His People, so get ready! And the people (haven’t we all been there-after being stirred up), respond, “Tell us plainly, shoot it to us straight - “What exactly should we do?”

Recall that John had proclaimed, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord-Repent’ (Luke 3:4); which means in other words that I need to admit I need a savior – there is sin in my life (of course) and that I want to end it, turn away from sin by turning to God. So, I say it and am baptized, according to John. Did that! But today’s gospel has people ask naturally what’s the next step, “Now what?”

Do you remember the old radio ‘News and Comment’ ABC daily show, ‘Paul Harvey – Good Day’. He had a lot of catchphrases unique to him. Another was, “Stand by, for the.... Newwws”. Or thinking of John’s preaching today, midway through Paul Harvey’s segment, he’d say, “Page Two.....” as he was reading his transcript copy. Well, John’s giving the ‘rest of the story’ or ‘page two’ today!

I came upon Paul Harvey as a kid, growing up riding to school in a carpool, because he came on at 7:50 every morning radio on the way in. Now you might think we kids, why were we listening to news and comment, shouldn’t we be all into music tunes/jams on the way to school. Well, yes we should, we wanted to, we preferred music. But our driver had a rule, “We listen to music until someone starts ‘singing along’ – that breaks the deal, if anybody sings, then the station switches to Paul Harvey. Our driver said, “Don’t ruin the music!” The person will go unnamed, but I’ll say we listened to Paul Harvey a lot because of ‘em. But Paul actually helped us keep time, because he was so methodical, just like with the call sign like clockwork halfway through his segment, “Page Two”, we could tell as we pulled into the parking lot, whether we would have to rush to get to homeroom before the morning bell rang or not, based on where he was reading his broadcast.

So we get John’s ‘Page Two’ rest of story today! John gives very clear instructions, ‘ready-to-go’ actions to undertake while waiting for the messiah. It is not complicated. John advises here, to “Keep it simple” by always ‘doing the next right thing.’ Be kind, be fair, think of others (like Robert Fulghum’s old book ‘all I needed to learn, I learned in Kindergarten’):

- To all the crowds in general, John tells them, “Share, if you have two coats, give one away, if two bowls of beans, then pass one to the neighbor.”
- To the tax collectors, John counsels, “Don’t grift from others in your job

collecting tax – just the tax, no exorbitant commissions to yourself
-To the soldiers, John commands, “Don’t bully- Don’t seize people’s stuff under pretext of security. That’s what He means saying, “Be content with pay. He’s saying, “Don’t double dip-pay by plundering loot from your subjects” Be respectful of the dignity of other people.

What do all three of these group-specific moral directives have in common? They all three could be summarized as John telling us, “Look for change in yourself first” To preach repentance and changing the world, we begin with our selves. And not just that, but that each other person has their work to do themselves too, so respect their work while we wait for the Messiah to come. Basically, consider the other person’s plight (their walk in their own shoes). John is telling us to be good, do good in our own lane. And share, serve, help, others as best we can.

The ending of today’s gospel reading has John describing a ‘harvest scene’ when the Messiah comes – image of Christ with winnowing fan on the threshing floor (used to separate good/bad- sweep away the empty hull shell of grain, to leave the heavier kernel grain for keeping). This harvest scene circles back to an earlier image John conjured when he began preaching, in Luke 3:8, saying “**Bear fruit** worthy of repentance.” Bear fruit! That is his message. In Luke 3 here, John starts a theme that Luke carries through his whole gospel, as Jesus later several times will mention the ‘fruitfulness’ called for, from a life of discipleship with him.

It comes down to being part of Jesus’ life-giving work, life-giving to others. Recall that in John 10:10, Jesus announces that “I came that *they may have life* and have life abundantly.” That is fruit- Jesus wants life (seed-flourishing) for us. So Jesus carries this theme of ‘fruit bearing’ forward in His own teaching. In Luke’s version of the Beatitudes Sermon, (Luke 6), Jesus will summarize, “For every tree is known by its own fruit” —good from good and bad from bad—He’ll say, “Figs aren’t picked from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from brambles” (Luke 6:44). So, His followers are to ‘bear fruit’ – be good, do good. Jesus continues this theme in Luke 8:15, when He explains the parable of the Sower/Seed calling His disciples to be good soil, for seed to thrive, grow and “bear fruit thru patience.”

And again, in Luke 13:9, Jesus tells a wonderful parable of the patient gardener (Himself) who intercedes for a tree that an owner wants cut down because it is not bearing fruit, and the good gardener appeals, “Give me one more year to work with the tree- if it doesn’t bear fruit by then, cut it down.” That is Jesus, working with us, calling us to grow and better ourselves, as He will coax life from us – working with us to bear fruit. That is our advent season. While we wait for His coming, we are to work (bear fruit worthy of repentance-Luke 3:8) in His

name, serving others. Like how John redirects those coming out to him, telling them to show their fruit, the fruit of their repentance through their fair, sharing, loving interactions with others, so by our Christ-like treatment of others, through our care, consideration of them, we show our own growth, bringing to life in them, our fruit.