

Church of the divine love
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 15, 2024 10:15 AM
HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Prayer before worship – on insert

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn #56, vs. 5 & 6 – **O come, O come, Emmanuel**

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung)

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Zephaniah 3:14-20**

Canticle 9 – The First Song of Isaiah

Second Lesson: **Philippians 4:4-7**

Gradual Hymn #

Gospel: **Luke 3:7-18**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form VI page 392

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn #

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer B page 367

Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)	page 367
The Lord's Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn #	
Post Communion Prayer	page 365
Prayer for Peace – on insert	
Prayer For the Parish	page 817
Prayer of St. Francis	page 833
Dismissal Hymn #	
Dismissal	

Sermon Sunday December 15th, 2024

Zephaniah 3:14-20; Canticle 9; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

“What then should we do?” Each of us could probably talk about a time in our life when that was our question. I do not mean simply deciding what to do or figuring out what is on the to-do list for the day. The question in today’s gospel is more of an existential question, one that strikes at the very core of our being. It comes to us in many different ways.

Sometimes we realize something about ourselves or our life; we recognize a truth and know we need to make a change. Or maybe we recognize a particular behavior or pattern of how we think, act, see, relate to others, ourselves, the world, or God. We do the same thing over and over and nothing seems to change. There is no movement or growth. Perhaps for the first time we acknowledge the reality of addiction. Or maybe we have lived with a deep sense of unhappiness or restlessness. And we are left wondering, what do I do now? Other times, whether or not we want them or are ready, life brings us changes. The loss of a loved one, a divorce, a shattered dream, betrayal of a friend, the last child that grows up and moves out all leave us asking, what do I do now? Regardless of how it comes about, that question brings us to a crossroads. It is a place of discernment and decision and ultimately a place of repentance. We must begin looking for a new direction for our life. It is the question today’s gospel sets before us. It is asked three times – by the crowds, the tax collectors, and the soldiers.

Today's gospel is the continuation of last week's gospel. John the Baptist is in the wilderness proclaiming repentance, echoing the Prophet Isaiah's words "Prepare the way of the Lord," and reminding us that all flesh shall see the salvation of the Lord. If last week's gospel was a call to repentance, then today's gospel demands action. Repentance requires action. It must become for us a lived reality. The Word of God always seeks from us a response. And that is exactly what John the Baptist demands of those who come to him. You brood of vipers, you sons of snakes – what are you doing here? Don't tell me who you are. I don't care who your family is. Show me who you are. Show me your repentance. John has challenged them to bear fruits worthy of repentance. His words have left them at the crossroads of repentance. They have heard a new truth in John's preaching. They have recognized a need to change and they want to know what to do. It is a legitimate question. Even when we recognize the need and desire to turn our life in a new direction, that whole process can seem so big, so overwhelming, that it seems impossible.

Many years ago, a dear friend and mentor pointed out to me some hard truths about my life. I remember asking him, so what should I do now? He looked at me and simply said, Go do the next right thing. That was not an answer that I either understood or wanted. As our discussion continued, I realized he was not telling me to go fix my life all at once. He was only asking me to take the first step in a new direction. What should I do after that, I asked him. His answer was the same. Go do the next right thing. And after that go do the next right thing. He set me on a path of repentance. These small and simple, though not necessarily easy, steps would become life changing behavior.

That is exactly what John the Baptist tells those who ask him, what should we do? He tells the crowd to share their food with those who are hungry and have none. If they have two coats, they are to give one to someone who has no coat. It is not hard to figure out. It is the next right thing to do. To the tax collectors he says act fairly, be honest in your dealings with other people, do not take more than owed you. It is the next right thing to do. And he tells the soldiers not to abuse their power, to not manipulate others, and to not create more victims. It is the next right thing to do. John did not tell any of them to go and be something different. Instead, he called them to be who they are but in a different way. He did not tell the tax collectors to go find an honest living. He asked of them honest tax collecting. He did not tell the soldiers to stop being soldiers but to be soldiers who respected others and understood the danger of power. He called the crowds to remember that their life is bound up in their neighbor's life and there is no room for indifference, complacency, or miserly giving.

For those who want the world fixed John's answers are not very satisfactory. Poverty still remains, unjust economic systems still exist, and power is still abused. But let's be honest Jesus didn't really fix the world either. He engaged and gave himself to the world one person, one relationship, and one moment at a time. He loved the world to death and beyond. He showed a different way of being, a different way of living and relating, he offered different priorities and values, and then invited us to participate and follow him. In doing all that he showed us what it means and looks like to be human, to be the dwelling place of God. John doesn't ask them to change the world but to change themselves. He doesn't tell them to quit their jobs but to live a different life. The crowds who came to him may not be able to eliminate poverty, but they can share what they have with the cold and hungry. The tax collectors who came to him may

not be able to overhaul the tax code, but they can be honest and fair. The soldiers who came to him may not be able to end the Roman occupation, but they can act with integrity and not abuse their power. Ordinary life is our primary spiritual practice. Ordinary life is the place we rediscover and reclaim ourselves. Look at the ordinary and every day circumstances of your life. What do you see? What relationships do you have? Who are the people in your life?

The crowds ask him, "What then should we do?" The tax collectors ask the same question and so do the soldiers. You know what strikes me? Just how unoriginal and ordinary is John's answer. He doesn't tell them or us anything they or we have not already heard or did not already know. He tells them to share, be honest and fair, don't be a bully. That's pretty ordinary and everyday stuff. It's what we were taught as little kids. And maybe that's the point. It sounds to me as if John is saying that ordinary and routine life like feeding and clothing others, tax collecting, and soldiering are spiritual practices. He did not tell the soldiers to join the Salvation Army or the tax collectors to get jobs as social workers. And he did not tell the crowds to organize an outreach program or go on a mission trip. Instead, John sends them home to live their lives. Repentance and faithfulness happen in our everyday lives, not apart from them. We are not asked to become something we are not but to reclaim and become more fully who and what we are. Be a caring neighbor. Be a fair tax collector. Be an honorable soldier. John's answers are simple, concrete, practical.

Repentance is not just about us. It is connected to and happens in relationship with God and our neighbor. It always restores, enhances, and gives life. It is not about escaping the circumstances of our life but about engaging those circumstances in a new and different way – God's way. Repentance opens us to see ourselves and each other as we really are in God. It fills us with the joyful expectation of the one who is more powerful, the Messiah. So, I wonder, what is the next right thing for your life? Identify that and you will have discovered a place of repentance, a place of expectation, a place of the good news, and ultimately the place where the Messiah is coming to you. **Amen.**

All baptized Christians, regardless of age, are welcome to receive communion in the Episcopal Church.

3 ADVENT	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS
	11:15 AM	VESTRY MEETING
MONDAY	8:30 PM	AA MEETING
WEDNESDAY	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING
THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP CHRISTMAS SALE
	8:30 PM	AA MEETING

SATURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP CHRISTMAS SALE
4 ADVENT	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS

	Today	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Jess Berbeck	Dana Kenn
Coffee	Janet Croft	Erika Febres

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

Sister Eddie	Betty Curley	Jess
Bob Curley	Steve Curley	Art
Chris Dickson	John Rocco	Deb P.
John Mulligan	Marjorie Guerrier	Lynette
Manetta Family	Robert Hosey	Ryan
Christopher	Bernie Walther	Celeste
Beverly Noel	Phil Ryder	Warren
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Donna A.	Kate Jones	Aidan
Sally & Roger	Sophia	Ciara
Mary & Family	Wendy	Jan

Nathan Treadwell

Gladys Hadija

Vincent

Michael & Family

Matthew Treasure

Mo

Michelle & Baby

Joseph

Annie

Jerry& Family

All people and countries suffering from violence, hatred and natural disaster. The homeless and food insecure.

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them. Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen.

To add or make changes to prayer list during the week, email

Janet Croft at jmc220@optonline.net.

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart, and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,

Lay my life before you,

How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus
and third verse starting with Spirit.

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn

but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So
mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that

all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince
of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions
and glory, now and for ever. Amen

