

Church of the Divine Love
THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 14, 2025 10:15 AM
HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

A Morning Prayer – on insert

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn - (see hymn board for all hymns)

Opening Acclamation page 355

Gloria page 356

Collect for 3 Advent page 212

First Lesson: **Isaiah 35:1-10** (*pages 615 in the Bible*)

Psalm 146:4-9 page 803

Second Lesson: **James 5:7-10** (*page 1056*)

Gradual Hymn

Gospel: **Matthew 11:2-11** (*page 844*)

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form IV page 388

The Confession page 393

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

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Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)	
The Lord's Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn	
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Dismissal Hymn	

Sermon Sunday December 14th, 2025

Isaiah 35: 1-10; Psalm 146: 4-9; James 5: 7-10; Matthew 11: 2-11.

Beloved in Christ,

We are a people of expectations. When we go to bed at night, we expect the sun to rise in the morning. We expect others to stop at the stop sign. We expect it will take about an hour and a half to drive to New Jersey. We expect the church to be open on Sundays, the lights on, and Eucharist to be celebrated. We have expectations for what is appropriate behavior for ourselves and others. Our days are full of expectations. They offer some predictability and order to our world and lives.

There are other expectations, however. They affect us more profoundly than the day-to-day expectations. Sometimes they are expectations of hope and other times they are expectations of dread. Either way they have the power to imprison us. Expectations of hope create a framework for how we think the world and life should be. They are often the ideals and dreams that carry us forward. They, in some way, describe our world vision and what we want. There

are also expectations of dread, the things of life that we fear and want to avoid. Whenever we speak about wanting to simply get through the next day, the week, a particular aspect of our life there is an underlying expectation of dread. The thing about expectations is that they pull us out of the present moment into a future we do not yet have, except as it exists in our head. Pretty soon we begin to act and speak as if our expectations, either of hope or dread, are the reality of our lives. We allow those expectations to shape our attitudes, our beliefs, and the way we relate to others. Those expectations even shape our image of who God is, where God can show up, and how God should act. If God does not meet our expectations, we are often too quick to question God rather than ourselves. We trust our expectations of what God should be doing more than we trust what God is actually doing.

John the Baptist is a man of expectations. Last week's gospel showed John to be a voice crying out in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near." He expects a new kingdom and a new ruler. He expects wrath, fire, axes. He expects one who is more powerful. John's expectations have given him the confidence and ability to turn his back on the religious establishment, to go the desert, and to seek God in the wild and untamed places of life. Today, the gospel offers a very different picture of John. Today he is a prisoner with a question, "Are you the one, or are we to wait for another?" So, what happened? How did John get from the vast wilderness expanse to the confines of four walls? How did he go from being a prophet with all the answers to a prisoner with questions? At one level it started when he criticized King Herod. "It is not lawful," John said, "for you to have your brother's wife" (**Mt. 14:1-4**). So, Herod arrested, bound, and imprisoned him. That's the historical answer but holy scripture always invites to see and listen more deeply, to discern the spiritual meaning.

Herod may have put John in jail but John's own expectations have imprisoned him. Herod's jail, the historical bricks and mortar, is an external symbol of the inner prison in which John now waits. It is the interior prison of disappointment and disillusion. He is confined by his own unmet expectations. He has heard about all that the Christ, the Messiah, is doing but where is the ax, the fire, the winnowing fork? Where is the wrath in the midst of cleansing lepers, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead? So, John sends a message, "Are you the one who is to come or are we to wait for another?" It's as if John is saying, "You, you're the one? Isn't there someone else? Perhaps someone who better fits my expectations? "Whenever we expect Jesus to exercise power like a classic hero – a strong force, superhero like – he completely reverses our expectations of who he is and what God's kingdom is like. That reversal is at the heart of John's question. It is a reversal that changes how we live, relate to others, and engage the world.

That reversal is taking place in John. In last week's gospel (**Mathew 3:1-12**) John was a wild man, in this week's gospel (**Matthew 11:2-11**) he's an inmate. Last week he wandered the open expanse, this week he's confined to a jail cell. Last week he was absolutely sure of what he knew, this week he's shackled by uncertainty and not knowing. Last week he was a prophet with a voice, this week he's a prisoner with a question. John has been incarcerated by his own expectations of who the Messiah is and how the Messiah should act. His vision of the kingdom is too small, his expectation of the Messiah too narrow. That is the danger of holding our expectations too tightly. Whether they are expectations of hope or expectations of dread our own expectations often blind us to the one who is coming, to the one who is more powerful. We imprison ourselves with a view of God, the kingdom, the world, our own lives that is too small, too narrow. We try to confine God's work and life to our expectations. But that is not who God is or how God acts.

We thought God would make our lives easy and instead he calls us to live more deeply. We wanted God to eliminate our suffering and instead discovered God standing with us in the midst of our pain. We expected God would make us number one but he called us to identify with the least, the last, the lost. We wanted him to make us strong but he called us to discover his strength in our weakness. We hoped God would destroy our enemies but he commanded us to love them. We wanted to be the leaders but God told us to be servants. Every time one of our expectations is unmet our prison walls crumble. The way has been prepared and we must decide, will we escape or simply rebuild the walls? It would be so much easier if Jesus would just come, do, and be as we expect. But he won't. He won't leave us in our cells no matter how comfortable or safe they might seem to us. He loves us too much.

There is a part of us, however, that persists with our expectations and our question. "Yes or no, are you the one who is coming? Or are we to wait for another? Just answer the question Jesus." He does not do that for us or for John. A simple yes or no answer will not release us from our jails. We will escape only when we let go of our expectations. We will escape when we open our minds and hearts to bigger kingdom. We will escape when we trust God more than our ideas about God. The Season of Advent is the season of jailbreaks. It is the season of escaping our expectations of God. It is the time in which the falling apart of our worlds is shown not to be the end of the world; when wrath, axes, and fire are about love and healing rather than punishment and destruction; when God is as quiet as a thief in the night. So, I wonder, where have you imprisoned yourself with expectations of hope or dread? In what ways do you work to rebuild your prison walls? How have you isolated yourself from the love, healing, and life God offers?

The door of your cell is locked but only from the inside. Open the door and flee the confines of

your expectations. A new world awaits you. What will you see and hear? The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. That would be us. If today you feel like John- asking, waiting, wondering- rejoice! Because the Savior is already near, already healing, already loving, already coming for you and for me. **Amen!**

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

Please turn in Christmas flower memorial envelopes by Sunday Dec. 21st.

Make checks payable to Church of the Divine Love Altar Guild.

If you did not get an envelope there are some at the back of the church.

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS
MONDAY	8:00 PM	AA MEETING
TUESDAY	6:00 PM	BIBLE STUDY
WEDNESDAY	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING
THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP HOLIDAY SALE
SATURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP HOLIDAY SALE
THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS
	Today	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Jess Berbeck	Deb Giordano
Coffee Hour	Erika Febres	Jess Berbeck

SUPPORT THE FOOD PANTRY - DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

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:

Barbara Curran	Betty Curley	Martin
Bob Curley	Steve Curley	Joseph
Chris Dickson	John Roccoo	Deb P.
John Mulligan	Marjorie Guerrier	Bobby
Scottie Credendino	Michael	Ryan
Sister Eddie	Bernie Walther	Celeste
Beverly Noel	Phil Ryder	Warren
Anthony Paribello	Jonathan	Del
Donna Amundsen	Kate Jones	Jan
Shannon & Family	Vincent & Barbara	Sandy
Mary & Family	Wendy	James
Gladys Hadija	Sophia	Aidan
Michael & Family	Brooke & Kylee	Mo
Michelle & Family	Christopher	Annie
Timothy Treasure	Donna A.	Aika

Moises Parra

Misael Varas

Jay

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 the prayer list during the week,
email Janet Croft at jmc220@optonline.net.

A Morning Prayer

Father in heaven, I stand ready to receive Your wisdom and guidance. In each decision, big or small, lead me to discern your will and to act accordingly. Help me to understand the depth of Your wisdom, finding guidance in Your word and through prayer. Teach me to be patient as I wait for Your direction, trusting that Your timing is perfect. May I navigate this day with the assurance that Your wisdom is a treasure far greater than any earthly knowledge. Guide my thoughts and actions, that they may be a reflection of Your discernment and love. In Your guidance, I find the path to a life of purpose and peace.
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 forever. Amen

