

Rev. Derek Fairman

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent A

This Sunday is known as Gaudete Sunday, because it is a Sunday during the Advent Season in which the Church proclaims great joy. During the Advent Season the Church takes the time to repent and to prepare herself for the coming of the Lord, her Bridegroom. Yet this Sunday is a bit different because the Church takes the time to remember that this time of preparation is not sorrowful but joyful. This joy is expressed in the Scripture readings we have for this Sunday.

In the Gospel reading we hear about St. John the Baptist sending some of his disciples to the Lord Jesus, to see if the Lord Jesus is the One who is to come. We might wonder why it is that St. John the Baptist wants to ask the Lord Jesus this. From the Gospel passage that we heard last week, we know that St. John the Baptist was preaching a message of repentance. He said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, “You brood of vipers! Who told you to flee from the coming wrath?” St. John the Baptist warned the people to repent of their sins. He said all of this to prepare the people for the Lord's coming.

When the Lord Jesus came, He did tell people to repent, too. On the other hand He gave the blind their sight, the deaf their hearing and the lame their ability to walk. He cleansed lepers and raised the dead. He did not primarily bring punishment but mercy. While St. John the Baptist preached repentance in order to prepare for the coming of the Messiah, when the Messiah came, His presence was characterized by mercy and kindness. These two times were very different from each other. Perhaps that explains why St. John the Baptist wanted to be sure that the Lord Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Yes, St. John the Baptist did warn the people to be repentant, and the Lord Jesus needed the people to turn away from their sins. Yet there is more to what the Lord Jesus does than just turn people away from sin. Being cleansed from sin is painful, and letting go of our vices is a painful task as well. But the Lord brings healing. Even though we must suffer in order to be a holy person, God gives us strength and comfort. Even as He calls us to endure pain, He is right there to heal the pain. We must endure that pain to do what is right, but God comforts us.

That is what the Gospel is about: it is about healing those who needed healing. So, when we hear the Lord Jesus proclaim that the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them,

