

Third Sunday of Advent, December 11

Is 35: 1-6a, 10; Jas 5:7-10; Mt 11:2- 11

In today's first reading, Isaiah continues his joyous vision of the coming messianic kingdom: having depicted the end of violence, he now shows us a reality in which land and people alike are freed from weakness and given full faculties to glorify God – a better world in which only the good moments of yesterday will remain. Our psalm echoes this message of the Lord's justice.

In Matthew's Gospel, the last and greatest of the prophets – John the Baptist – struggles with the reality that all of this has not yet come to pass. We all have our days where we long for divine justice and pray "thy kingdom come" just that little bit more forcefully. While John had correctly identified Jesus as the Messiah, he shows some uncertainty, most likely because Jesus had not yet fulfilled all that Isaiah and his fellow prophets had promised. Jesus, in typical fashion, responds by referring John back to the Hebrew Scriptures. Even though the final triumph has not yet come, the messianic work of healing has already begun in John's day.

In a similar way, the audience of James' epistle looks anxiously for the second coming of the Lord. In a way that echoes Isaiah's vision of the desert and steppe blooming and many of the parables of Christ, James gives us an agricultural analogy. We will reach the resolution of all things, but like the harvest, it is in the future and we cannot accelerate it. Instead, what we can control is how we live now, and especially how we treat one another.

How can we walk the way of love while we wait for the coming of the Lord?

– Jeff Lipschultz, Holy Name parishioner