

Advent 3

December 13, 2026 (Year B)



Through faith our sins become, not ours but Christ's, upon whom God laid the sins of us all and who bore our sins. He is the Lamb of God which bears the sins of the world. All the righteousness of Christ, in turn, becomes ours.

– Martin Luther –

On the 37th of the 95 Theses

PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

This is the passage that Jesus would use in the synagogue as his public ministry begins in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30). The prophet Isaiah spoke here of the year of the Lord's favor for his people. God's will is for his people to experience healing, wholeness, and freedom. The poetic language of this passage depicts a nation rising up out of the ashes of shame and destruction. Out of ruins will the Lord rebuild his people. Justice will reign over those who have been neglected, injured, and cast aside. Israel will turn away from their unjust actions and turn to the Lord who will renew his covenant with them. Salvation is made possible because of God's great love for his people who will be known because of the work of the Lord who is faithful.

- How are God's people known only because of what he does and has done in the world?
- Why is it never about what we do, even if we do good things in his name?

Here in Isaiah and in other places in the Scriptures, the idea of being clothed in salvation connotes a change of reality for those who wear "robes of righteousness," "armor of God," (Ephesians 6:11-17), and "humility" (1 Peter 5:5).

- Why are images of fine and fancy garments representing God's will in our lives something that we can all relate to?
- How does the image of bridal clothing signal that Israel is of the utmost importance to God?

Psalms 126

This psalm points to the changing circumstances God has in store for his people. The Lord is at work restoring the fortunes of his people. The psalmist began, not with a prayer, but with a remembrance of times gone by where God's people rejoiced in the Lord's restoration. Even the nations surrounding Israel noticed that something good was happening.

- Is it easier to see God's hand in the lives of others than it is in your own? Why or why not?
- When you see the goodness of God in the lives of others, in what ways does that bolster your faith in him?

The psalmist continued by mentioning the plight of the sower. Those who planted seeds in sorrow will reap a bountiful harvest in joy. For Israel this psalm points to their sinfulness that was the direct cause of exile to Babylon. Even so, the Lord will bring them back home and there will be joyful celebration and a new beginning.

- How does our sin cause us sorrow, pain and exile from God? Where does the joy come from in the aftermath of separation?

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Paul concluded his first letter to the Thessalonians with a word of commendation, instructing believers on how to conduct themselves as they awaited the coming day of the Lord. Their lives were to be defined by prayer and thanksgiving. This, Paul told them, is God's will for them. And because God is faithful, even these tasks are in his hands. Even their prayer, thanksgiving, and blameless conduct, is only accomplished through the Lord's faithfulness.

- What does it mean to pray without ceasing? How are the lives of Christians shaped by prayerfulness?
- What does it mean for us to "abstain from every evil"? Is this something we are capable of?
- How does God's Spirit keep us sound and blameless?

John 1:6-8, 19-28

In this week's Gospel we get another glimpse into the work of John the Baptist. Unlike Mark, John does not give much information about how successful John's ministry at the Jordan was. There is no talk of massive crowds from Jerusalem and the Judean countryside. Instead, John's interactions are with priests and Levites sent out to question him.

But John's purpose is consistent in both Gospels. He is not the light. He is not the Messiah. He is not the one they should be looking for. He is simply there to prepare the way for one much greater than he is. He is a voice crying out in the barren places, speaking God's word to herald the coming of God's anointed one.

- Why do you think the priests and Levites wanted to know more about John?
- How important are credentials when determining who has the authority to speak God's word?

John's purpose was to testify to the light that all might believe through him. But over time John's testimony became of less and less significance. Believers came to know Jesus through the work of the Spirit in Him.

- Did John fail or succeed in his mission to make Christ known? What obstacles stood in the way of his proclamation? What ultimately came from John's teaching?
- What was John able to proclaim about Jesus? What are we able to proclaim about Jesus? How are these proclamations similar or different?