

Advent 3 12/11/22
Matthew 11:2-15 A

"ARE YOU THE ONE WHO IS TO COME, OR SHALL WE LOOK FOR ANOTHER?"

Why? You know by now that is my favorite question to ask you. That is my favorite question because I think it's important to know why we do what we do in church and the absolute, worst reason to do anything is because "pastor said so"? Right?

Which brings us to the "why" question of today: Why blue? Why do we use blue paraments for the season of Advent?

Consider this: Where do you prominently see blue? The morning skies. Blue skies mean that morning has dawned. The light has overcome the darkness. In the Scriptures, darkness symbolizes sin and all its dreadful curse, especially death. Light symbolizes Christ. Jesus Himself said, "I am the light of the world." John tells us, "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn 1:5). The Psalmist says, "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning" (Ps 30:5). THE BLUE PARAMENTS REMIND US AND COMFORT US THAT WE HAVE REASON TO REJOICE – THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS COMING TO OVERCOME THE DARKNESS OF SIN.

This Sunday is known as Gaudette Sunday. Gaudette means "rejoice." This Sunday takes its name from the first words of our Gradual, "Rejoice."

Yes, Jesus said, in this world, we will have trouble -- we walk through the darkness and dangers of the valley of the shadow of death. There will be wars and rumors of wars, floods and tornados, deafness, Alzheimer's, crime, and death. Children and parents, and those we love very much, will

break our hearts. But, Dear Saints of God, as the troubles of earthly life press in upon us, the darkness of this age overwhelms us and we began to wonder if the Light of the Word will ever dawn.

In our Gospel, the disciples of John were wondering if they had reason to rejoice. They began to doubt.

What happened was this: John the Baptist was in prison, for reprimanding the king for taking his brother's wife. As John's disciples saw their teacher imprisoned for preaching the Gospel, they began to doubt if Jesus, this humble carpenter from Nazareth, was the Messiah, the long-promised Savior. John wanted them to believe, without any doubt, that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Savior. So, John sends His disciples directly to Jesus. Coming to Him, they asked, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another" (v. 11)?

Jesus answers them with the word of Isaiah, the words of our Old Testament reading, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (vv. 4-5).

Through Isaiah, God told us that when the Messiah came, He would remove the curse of sin by taking the sin of all the world upon Himself. In His own words, Jesus tells us He is the Messiah, the promised Redeemer. Jesus tells us that He is the Messiah because He is doing what God said the Messiah would do – removing the curse of sin.

The miracles Jesus did on this earth were a foretaste of the feast in heaven to come. God never created eyes to go blind; legs to go lame; ears to go deaf; God never wanted us to die. So, He sent His Son, Jesus, to remove the curse of sin. Yes, today, we groan and are burdened, we bear

the cross as this dying world presses in upon us and our bodies wear out.

But, God gives us reason to rejoice. This earth is not our home. Christ has opened heaven to us so that it may be our home. In heaven, there is no sin. There is only rest, rest from all the trials and tribulations, miseries and worries of this present age. In heaven, the book of Revelation comforts us, God will wipe every tear from our eyes.

But oh, waiting is so hard, isn't it? Our patience wears thin and we wonder if we can bear up under the daily struggles of life.

Do you ever have doubts? Like John's disciples, we can see the "bad" all around us and wonder "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

God said to us that we are to "[cast] all your anxieties on him, because He cares for you" (1 Pe 5). But, we doubt. Does He really care? If He cares, why do I feel so downtrodden?

God said to us, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you" (Ps 50). And we doubt. Where is our deliverance? Why does it never seem to come?

It is no secret that many Christmas is often a time of great sadness for many people. That is why, I believe, that many people try to find good cheer in artificial emotionalism. Take Christ out of Christmas and what are you left with? Nothing! The things of this world – the things in which we try to find joy and happiness – cannot overcome the darkness.

That is why the words of Paul direct us to: "Rejoice **in the Lord** always". On this side of heaven, as we walk by faith and not by sight, it is easy to doubt. In faith, we need to look up to our Coming King.

Baptized and living in Christ, everything that is His, He freely gives to us. His victory over the grave is our victory. His eternal home of heaven is

our eternal home. And, let us not forget that in this dying world, Jesus had to carry the cross. “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Lk 9:23). As Jesus carried the cross, we carry the cross. Good Friday always comes before Easter Sunday. It was true for our Jesus and it is true of us.

As we live out our lives in faith, God in His wise mercy may allow a cross to come cross to come into our lives. But, He is working **good** for us – humbling us, so that we look up in faith to Him. In accordance with His good and gracious will, He may remove that cross. But if He wills that we carry that cross, He will give us strength to carry it, as Paul says, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Ph 4:13).

And every day, God gives us the hope of heaven to come. As we walk by faith, we look up to our King in prayer, “we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation.” The Light of the World continues to come to us to lighten our hearts to drive out all doubt and despair.

Does it seem your doubts will overcome your faith? Does your hope in God’s promise waver? Then do this...

Hang your baptismal certificate on your bedroom wall so that it is the last thing you see before closing your eyes in sleep and the first thing you see when you open your eyes in the morning. This certificate reminds you that you are God’s child and He has a place in heaven for you.

Come to Communion to eat our Lord’s Body and drink His Blood. Receive the forgiveness and strength He gives you there. And be reminded how glorious it will be to feast at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb in heaven for eternity.

Teach your children and grandchildren the true meaning of Christmas

and share with them, the joy, and strength and comfort, that your Savior Jesus gives you.

In our Epistle, the Apostle James writes,

“Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (Ja 5:7-8).

“Be strong; fear not!” The blue paraments comfort us that just as the dawn overcomes the darkness, “[our] God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you” (Is 35:4).

Rejoice, and I say again, rejoice!

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.