

# Third Sunday of Advent – December 16, 2018

Zepheniah 1: 14-18a Phillipians 4: 4-7 Luke 3: 10-18

The overall theme that seeks our attention in the Liturgy today is rather easy to recognize. It is “joy.” “We are called to “Rejoice.” In many ways it is this same theme that pervades this whole period before Christmas.

Why are we called to “Rejoice”? We rejoice because the foundation of everything that is a part of this Advent Season is declared by the prophet Zepheniah: “The Lord your God is in your midst.” We rejoice because, as Paul states “The Lord is near.” Finally, we rejoice because of what is the basis of the ministry of John the Baptist: “He preached good news to the people”: the Promised One is here.



Quite simply, rejoicing is at the very heart of the Christian Faith. Even in the midst of struggles and challenges, even facing pain and suffering, we are called by the faith that we profess to be persons of joy. Joy is not some sort of superficial emotion, a superficial giddiness. Joy is to be found deep down within ourselves, in the depth of our interior life. Joy can be present because of the confidence, the hope, the trust that we place in the presence of a loving God in our world and in our lives.

Is this not the fundamental message of the Advent Season? We express a confident anticipation and expectation of a loving God, a God who, in the person of Jesus Christ, came humbly into our world. It is a joy that is based on the assurance, as Zechariah points out, that God is genuinely faithful, true and dependable. When we think of our own human experiences, how often have we been let down, disappointed, by those we counted on? How often have we been abandoned, ignored, by those who did not come through when they were needed? This is not the experience with God that Advent announces and that is the basis of the true celebration of Christmas.

How ought this confident faith affect us? For an answer, listen to John the Baptist and then look at the practicalities of our own lives. How can evidence of genuine justice and respect be given to those who are a part of our day to day living, or to those who are a part of our community, our nation, our world, or to those who are often overlooked, forgotten or demeaned especially by those who could do so much good?

John, in announcing the Good News that the Promised One is here, clearly makes a challenge to do the right thing, to do the just thing. He calls for doing what genuinely makes the truth and goodness of God evident in our respective lives and in our world.

The source of our joy and the reason that we are to rejoice is present to us and is present with us. More importantly, that source of joy is to be present through us in reflecting, in showing forth in a truly good and gracious God.