

### III Advent 2025

#### Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

***The Collect I Cor. 4.1-5 St. Matthew 11.2-10***



In the Early Church...Advent was a much longer season...often lasting seven weeks (40 days), with fasting and penitence similar to Lent. The longer Advent Season focused on deep penitence and preparation for Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. Our shorter four-week observance of Advent, with its focus on preparation for Christ's First Coming on Christmas Day, was established by the 13th Century.

Today is the Third Sunday in Advent and like its counterpart the Fourth Sunday in Lent is a "lighten up" Sunday. The more austere violet vestments we associate with the penitential seasons are replaced by rose-colored vestments. Flowers which are not normally seen during Advent and Lent, decorate the High Altar on these two "lighten up" Sundays.

The Introit read by the Celebrant at the beginning of the Mass begins with the Latin word "Gaudete" (Rejoice), and comes from Paul's Letter to the Philippians.. *"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to all people. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."* The Introit expresses the joy and hope we have for the eminent arrival of Jesus on Christmas Day.

We need to prepare our hearts, minds and souls to receive Jesus on Christmas Day...and that means we need to pay attention to the messengers that help get us ready...and their messages...and then take action. During the Church Year, we get a healthy dose of Paul's letters to "those Corinthians". Paul is often frustrated by churches where disorder and petty squabbles are the order of the day. We sometimes laugh at "those Corinthians", but we have to remember Paul's letters are also directed at us...so we have to pay attention to what he says.

In the first part of today's Epistle...Paul tells the people they should think of him and the Church's clergy as Christ's servants...with messages to give to the people...that their messages must be true...and that they are faithful to Christ and spreading the Good News. The second part of the Epistle is the Advent message about final judgment at the end of time. When Jesus returns, people's dark secrets and hidden

purposes all be exposed. This brings us back to the Advent Collect...get rid of the bad things holding us back...and embrace the Light of Christ...so we will be ready for his arrival on Christmas Day and at the end of time.

The main character in today's Gospel other than Jesus is John the Baptist. Jesus and John were cousins. John's mission was to be a messenger and get people ready for the Messiah's arrival. John's work followed in the footsteps of the prophet Malachi...whose name means "my messenger"...and who lived 500 years earlier. Malachi's message to God's people was for them to turn away from their bad behavior, because God would send a messenger to prepare his way, and the Lord they were looking for would come suddenly to his Temple. The messenger they longed for would come and proclaim a new covenant. John the Baptist was the messenger Malachi prophesied about.

In the Gospel we find John has gotten himself arrested and is sitting in jail. John heard about Jesus' miracles, so he sent some of his friends to ask Jesus if he was the one they expected or should they look for someone else. John still wasn't certain what to make of Jesus. Like other Jews, he expected the Messiah to be a military leader like King David. Jesus told John's friends to go back and tell him what they had seen with their own eyes: blind people had their sight restored, deaf people could hear again, people with skin diseases were healed, dead people were brought back to life. John then remembered Isaiah prophesied that all of these things would take place when the Messiah came. Jesus was also saying he came to serve others with humility and compassion.

Advent is the season of preparation; the time we get ready to celebrate Jesus' first coming on Christmas Day. His humble birth in a barn led to a life of complete and unconditional service and ended with his humiliating death on the Cross. It is because of that humiliating death we can look forward with hope to his second coming and the promise of everlasting life. That is the greatest gift we could ever ask for, at Christmas, or at any other time. It is a gift that should compel us to listen to what John the Baptist said, "Turn away from your sins. The Kingdom of God is near."

My message to you today is to listen and pay attention to what Malachi and John the Baptist have to tell us and get ready!

Get ready! Jesus is coming!

