

## BIBLE STUDY

December 10, 2018

### THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

#### 1. Gaudete Sunday=Rejoice because the Lord is near

Rose/pink vestments and candle of the Advent wreath. A lighter shade of purple to symbolize rejoicing at the nearness of Christmas and of the Lord always.

#### 2. Zephaniah 3: 14-18a

Zephaniah is one of the Minor Prophets.

The Major Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel.

The Minor Prophets are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Zephaniah was prophet during the reign of King Josiah. He was probably contemporary with the early career of Jeremiah. This was the height of Assyrian influence not long before the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. Zephaniah was a “fire and brimstone” prophet emphasizing the horror and destruction of the Day of the Lord for those who worshiped false gods and accepted foreign practices. There is a note of hope in the final verses as he describes a “faithful remnant” of Israelites who are faithful to God. For them he will restore Jerusalem. He calls on them to rejoice. The judgement has been removed God is in their midst. There is no reason for fear or discouragement. He is in their midst as a mighty savior.

#### 3: Response: Isaiah 12: 2-3, 4, 5-6

Actually a “psalm” from Isaiah. A psalm of thanksgiving. It repeats the theme of Zephaniah: Shout with exultation, City of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

#### 4. Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice, in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!

Kindness manifests our joy at the nearness of the Lord. The Lord is near because his second coming is imminent as Saint Paul and his communities believed. Also, the Lord is always near to us. He abides with us. The Father and the Son come and dwell within us as Saint John says. The Holy Spirit remains with us as an Advocate and Counselor.

Prayer and petition with thanksgiving will take away all anxiety.

“Worry about nothing, pray about everything.”

The peace of God that passes all understanding will watch over our minds and hearts.

## 5. Luke 3: 10-18

John's preaching first of all in verses 7-9 was to question the motives of those who came out for his baptism of repentance. He was not very diplomatic calling them "a brood of vipers!" He told them they needed to show their contrite spirit in concrete deeds. They could not rely on their privileged status of being sons of Abraham.

They ask 'what shall we do?' He responds with concrete suggestions based on their profession. Conversion must be manifest in daily life. They are to share food and clothing with those who do not have. Tax collectors should not collect more money than what is due. Soldiers should not misuse their authority and be content with their pay and not extort money from the people.

Concrete deeds of conversion have to do with the sharing and just handling of money and possessions. It doesn't get more concrete than that! This will be a theme throughout Luke's Gospel. We must not be overly attached to money and possessions. We must not be attached so that it limits our freedom to help others. He advises contentment with what we have as an antidote to wrong doing. If we have more, we want more. Also, treat others fairly and justly.

The people were filled with expectation wondering if John the Baptist was the Messiah. Hope was bursting forth in people's hearts. John points to Jesus who is greater than he. John is but an unworthy servant. This is the greatness of John. He knows that he is only the messenger and not the message. Jesus' baptism is of the Holy Spirit and far superior to his.

### Questions for discussion

1. What does "the nearness of God" mean to you? Do you feel the nearness of God?
2. What is the joy that Saint Paul is speaking of? Can we feel joy even when we have problems and worries? Have you ever experienced the peace that passes understanding? Does praying to God ease anxiety and increase joy? Joy may be the best tool of evangelization. Why?
3. What do you think about John's concrete recommendations for change? Can you apply them to yourself? What about his admonition to the soldiers to be content with pay? Sharing, just and fair deeds, being content are John's recipe for change.