

Lessons for The Third Sunday in Advent

December 17, 2017

Psalm 126 ~ *The people of God rejoice in his blessings promised through their restoration to Zion.*

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 ~ *The Lord's anointed comes preaching good news.*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 ~ *Be joyful always; pray continually!*

John 1:6-8, 19-28 ~ *John came to point the way to the Messiah.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Candle of the Shepherds - The Spirit of Joy

The third candle of the Advent wreath has been called the Candle of the Shepherds. It represents the spirit of joy with which the shepherds went to Bethlehem. This Sunday the Advent mood of repentance is replaced by rejoicing. The third candle is sometimes pink to recall the joyful anticipation in the hearts of the shepherds on their way to Bethlehem.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord Jesus, sometimes I feel burned out and burdened by all the troubles of this life. Help me recognize your saving power, that I may be restored and renewed by the joy of your favor toward me. Amen.

OFFERING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, bless these gifts of love we bring for You,
brought with joyful heart and smiling face,
As we share Your love in all we do
Leading those in need to know Your grace. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: Our giving reflects the gift of God's love and helps us grow to be more like our Father – It also helps those who receive help through our gifts grow in their trust of God's grace and love.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: In the midst of our brokenhearted world, we are captive to our sorrows and burdened with griefs. Even when God's messenger brings His redeeming word, we are like those who came out from Jerusalem to John, more concerned with determining the propriety of the messenger than appropriating the joy of the message. The fact is, this One who anoints us with water and His Spirit has made us blameless in spirit, soul and body, by His gift of life, and will keep us in His grace until He comes again. Therefore we rejoice!

THE SPIRIT OF OUR GOD

The Spirit of our God
Has sent good news with me
To mend the broken hearts
And set the captives free.

REFRAIN: Lift up your heart,
lift up your voice;
Rejoice; again I say, Rejoice!

Rejoice, all you who mourn;
Exchange your grief for crowns.
Now let your praise break forth
And sing with joyful sounds.

REFRAIN

Christ takes our sin stained shirt
And guilty, tattered dress,
And gives us in their place
New robes of righteousness!

REFRAIN

Gilbert A. Franke, 12/2005

Tune, Darwell's 148th

Refrain: Rejoice! The Lord is King! (Charles Wesley)