

Lessons for The Third Sunday in Advent**December 17, 2023**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:** Finding Joy in God's Promised Blessings

Isaiah brought the good news of the restoration and renewal of God's people in the year of the Lord's favor. St. Paul urged the Thessalonian believers to hold onto the joy of Christ's call even in the face of evil circumstances. John the Baptizer called the people's attention to the Christ whose coming would bring joy to those who had strayed from the straight path of the Lord.

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.

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.

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.

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!

Questions to Consider: Where is the joy in waiting for the Lord?

- Can you identify with poor brokenhearted captives imprisoned in their grief?
- What kind of message does it take to break through to grieving, broken people?
- What is your first thought if someone tells you to rejoice when you are filled with grief?
- Why do we rejoice when Jesus is the only one who walked the straight path of the Lord?

See next page for bonus. Hymn: The Spirit of our God

The reason for our Advent joy is the robe of righteousness we have been given in Christ.

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)*