

Seasons in the Key of Worship

devotions for

Advent



Reflect: Advent – Week 3

Scripture Readings*: Zephaniah 3:14-20, Philippians 4:4-7 Luke 3:7-18, Psalm 85 (NRSV)

The prophet Zephaniah sees the coming of the LORD. However, he reveals that when the LORD comes, Jerusalem will experience true “shalom.” Gladness and happiness will fill the hearts of the people. The LORD is thoroughly delighted with His people. It is a time of salvation and restoration.

Paul’s letter to the Philippians is an exhortation and reminder. He reminds us that the LORD is near, and as a result... we do not have to worry about anything and we can rejoice.

John’s words, recorded by Luke, are straightforward, piercing the hearts of his hearers. His message is simple. There must be a change in your hearts. God is about to act; judgment is coming. And you must have a new life! He calls them to repent and be baptized – a public demonstration of a choice to turn from sin. He then reminds them that there must be a whole new lifestyle, one lived in harmony with God, goodwill toward others, and with holiness. Finally, John points them to the Savior-Messiah, reminding them that He is coming... the One who would make all this possible.

Celebrate: Share the Joy

Throughout Scripture, the admonition of the prophets to repent is quickly followed by the promise of resulting joy – and that joy is seen and felt by all who hear and respond to the gift of God’s Son, Jesus. Like the crowds who followed John the Baptist, we often find ourselves asking, “What then should we do?” John’s answer to live a life of generosity is just as relevant to our lives today.

Which person in your life needs to experience the joy of the Lord this week? Who is praying for the steadfast love and salvation of the Lord? Perhaps it’s a package of Christmas cards made by your children or grandchildren that will bring joy to the residents of a senior center. Maybe it’s a plate of cookies or a gift card to a local grocery store that will brighten the face of a single mother. It might even be the gift of yourself – listening intently over a cup of cocoa – that helps a child feel connected to the love of Christ.

Prayer when lighting the third candle of the Advent wreath – “God of light, we take joy in the gift of your Son, Jesus. We ask you to make us mindful of those who still cry for ‘good tidings of great joy.’ Through us let them know the joy of your salvation. Blessed be God forever. Amen.”



*Readings are from the Revised Common Lectionary, Year C