

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 14, 2025

By Al Mansfield

Isaiah 35:1-6,10

Psalm 146

James 5:7-10

Matthew 11:2-11

MESSIANIC SIGNS

On this Third Sunday of Advent, known as Gaudete (Rejoice) Sunday, we hear about messianic signs - signs that the Messiah will work. The first reading from Isaiah prophesies these and Jesus specifies in the gospel that he is indeed fulfilling them. So we can and should rejoice that Jesus the Messiah has come, and will come again.

ISAIAH

In today's first reading, the Book of Isaiah is describing the future return of the Israelite exiles from the Babylonian Captivity. The desert will bloom just like the sea coast (Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon). The people are made strong and exultant when God comes to them. "Then the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing." Messianic signs!

The Responsorial, Psalm 146, pleads with God to "come and save us."

GOSPEL

Today's gospel account from Matthew finds John the Baptist in prison. He sends his disciples to Jesus to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" A strange question, since John has indicated on several occasions that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. Is John perhaps impatient to see Jesus operate more quickly to bring about the kingdom of God?

At any rate, Jesus sends word back to John citing his miraculous healing of the blind, lame, lepers, and the deaf. He says that "the dead are raised and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them." He speaks precisely of the messianic signs prophesied in the first reading. Jesus in effect tells John that the Messiah is indeed here and is performing the signs recorded by Isaiah.

Then Jesus asks his listeners, "What did you go out to the desert to see?" Jesus lauds John, calling him "a prophet and more than a prophet." Jesus continues his panegyric about John by saying that "among those born of woman, there has been none greater than John the Baptist." Great praise for a great prophet - from the greatest source possible!

JAMES

"Patience!" That's the message of our second reading from the Letter of James. He gives the example of a farmer, who has to be patient as he depends on the "early and late rains."

We are exhorted to make our hearts firm - to be courageous - "because the coming of the Lord is at hand."

Today's reading ends with a prohibition against complaining against one another. We are not to judge one another. "Behold the judge is standing before the gates." This is practical, concrete counsel to reform our behavior before the Lord comes and finds us wanting.

I AM NOT ASHAMED

In today's gospel, Jesus says: "And blessed the one who takes no offense at me." This is similar to another saying of Jesus: "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Matt. 8:38).

May we "take no offense" at Jesus. Let us not be ashamed of him and of his words in our "adulterous and sinful generation." Rather, let us echo St. Paul who says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith..." (cf. Romans 1:16). Amen!