

This time of year there many important questions. 'Have you forgotten anyone on your Christmas list? Where are you going to be Christmas? When you ask your loved one, what do you want for Christmas?' If she says, "nothing" or "it doesn't matter." Don't believe it. Men, don't mess this up. It's just going to be harder for you to 'see and hear' to know what's just the right gift to put under the tree for her. We have many questions in life. None - more important than the question we're given today from the greatest man born of human parents, **Are you the One who is to come?** *Are you the Christ or not?* John the Baptist awaits execution. He struggles the same reason you do. The same reason you don't, **Rejoice in the Lord always**, because of all that's going on.

This Sunday, called by ancient Latin name, *Gaudete*, Rejoice. Pink candle lit. The Early Church Advent names come from the historical Introits, **Rejoice in the Lord always**. Though in the penitential season of Advent, a season of fasting, special reflection, we still live with the reality of a reason to rejoice knowing the answer to the question, **Are you the One who is to come?**

Amazing reality we live, the world doesn't understand. In our OT reading, God's people had just been conquered by the Babylonians. The center of the lives, the temple destroyed. The city leveled, burned. Death everywhere. Most people taken captive as slaves in a new land. The prophet Isaiah speaks of God's **comfort, comfort, My people**. We think of the word 'comfort' we think, warm home, good food, nice shoes. They have nothing, God's Word of comfort comes to them. Is theirs. That is enough, rejoice!

The last Old Testament Prophet John the Baptist, in prison for speaking against the immorality of King Herod. Knowing he'll die. Brings question to Jesus. Jesus says, **tell John what you see and hear**. He directs John to Scripture. If John needs assurance, then he needs to look to the promises. Jesus points him to Isaiah 35. In all the OT, of all the healing miracles, even resurrection, no one is ever healed of blindness. Healing of the blind is one of the signs foretold the Christ would do. And now, blind can see. He has God's Word to comfort him. And that list of healing the Christ will do, the last named, greatest gift, **the poor have the good news preached to them**. That is enough, rejoice!

St. Paul, given holy words to write more of the New Testament than anyone, endured beating, abandonment, hardships, betrayals, sitting in prison, knowing he will die, writes to the Philippians: **Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, will I say, rejoice!** Paul commends us, not -Rejoice always, but **rejoice in the Lord always. The Lord is at hand**. And that's reason

enough to rejoice in all circumstances. If most things in your life right now may be going very well, God be praised, rejoice! You may also have many thing weigh you down, feel beat-up. Questions.

Perhaps like John may have been thinking in prison, "If the Christ comes to bring God's righteousness, why is this unrighteous king being permitted to rule unchecked, unpunished? Why am I the one suffering?" You've echoed those words, why is this happening to me? How we wonder when things don't go as we planned or expected. How easily we doubt God's care and goodness. Question God.

Are you the coming One or not? Are you the One who is working in my life? Are you there for me Lord? Do you hear my prayers? Have you forgotten me Lord? Do you hear my cries? When will I see you work things? Do you see hearts that are broken, families in distress? Do you see your people hurt. Why can't I see more of your works? **Are you still there for me?**

Jesus was directing John, his disciples, even you- in spite of what you may be going through -remember the Word of the Lord that endures forever, trust God's promises, His works, He will not ever fail you. How hard it is, when you see hurts, wrongs, your fears, brokenness. **The Lord is at hand!** Why Paul could proclaim -even in prison like John -**rejoice in the Lord always;** take comfort, not just when trials are over, but this is so important to confess, in the very midst of anything you may ever go through. It's why someone with great afflictions, wretched disease, even dying of cancer, still rejoice, confess God loves me and I'm blessed. Comfort, peace -not of this world-yours. You have His Word, His Sacraments, His works, That is enough.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Not because things will always be merry and bright, but because they won't but the Lord is with you.

We come here week after week the same way John sent his disciples to Jesus. **What do you hear and see?** Jesus doesn't give you all the things you want. No, He loves you too much for that, He always gives you what you need, and that is a far greater thing, for He alone can comfort you in your weakness, brokenness, and hurt. That was His message to John. To you. **Blessed are you who are not offended** by Jesus, uses humbles means of preachers, words, water, bread and wine to bring you the greatest gifts of this season. The foremost yours on that great list, **The poor have the good news preached to them.** Preached here. Preached in the Sacraments. Words that change everything for you. Literally joined to Him. That is enough, rejoice! Rejoicing even in the midst of trials, nothing can take joy, who you are, what is yours in Christ from you. See and hear. You are His. Rejoice.