

A Homily by the Rev. Dr. Renée Tembeckjian  
Trinity Episcopal Church  
14 December 2025  
Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146:5-10; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11

“La Vie en Rose”

I was thirteen when I needed my first pair of glasses, and in those days, the aviator style was all the rage. They came in different colors, so I chose pale pink ones. Now, if you are of a certain age, you might guess what came next. For weeks, folks would quote (or sing) that old Frank Sinatra tune – *I’m looking at the world through rose-colored glasses*.

Truth is, everything did look better – softer, healthier – but, of course, when I took them off, nothing had really out there. The lenses we wear, literal or otherwise, filter our view of the world, and in this case, pink ones just made everything *seem* rosier.

Such themes are at the heart of this day in the life of the church, marked as Rose Sunday, also called Rejoice Sunday. In a season of anticipation and preparation, we light the single pink candle in the Advent wreath as a symbol of encouragement that even in a world of darkness, the light of Joy *will*, indeed, come.

And we are, all of us, waiting for something, yes? Maybe it is a piece of news or test result or for the right moment to speak up. Maybe we are awaiting a birth or keeping vigil around a death. Maybe it’s for someone to show up, to leave, or finally figure it out. Whatever it is, we are, all of us, waiting for the Advent of hope and new life.

And this very personal kind of waiting is only magnified by our deep and growing concern for the wider world. We see the suffering and hear the cries of those who fear that the light of hope and new life will never, ever come.

But the message of Rose Sunday encourages us to believe. From the Prophet Isaiah, we have a vision of hope for the poor, the captives, the broken-hearted, and the oppressed – that *waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams shall flow in the desert*. And from James (reported brother of Jesus), we have a letter full of practical wisdom and guidance:

*As the farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth,  
being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains,  
you, also, must be patient.  
Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.*

We love this message and so dearly want to believe those “glad tidings of comfort and joy,” but we are currently besieged by *other* tidings – as too many deploy misinformation, cheer reactivity, reward incivility, abuse the planet, worship celebrity, ignore consequences, and absolve others from any accountability.

So, given the darkness in our own time, can we really trust this vision or are we just looking at the world through those proverbial rose-colored glasses?

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist is asking this same question and from a very dark place of his own, literally – a prison cell. Is the coming of the Lord finally and truly near? Is Jesus really the one they have been waiting for, whose Way he has been calling for?

As a public figure with disciples of his own, John could easily have been tempted to draw attention to himself, elevate his own importance, and even declare himself Messiah. Many saw him as a Messiah, anyway, so he could easily have boasted that he alone was the answer to everything, while declaring anyone else a fraud - fake news, so to speak.

But not John. He insists that he is *not* the light, but that he came to bear witness to it. Interestingly, in John's Gospel, he is not even called John the *Baptist*, but John the *Witness*, because his role in the larger unfolding story of redemption was to *testify*.

His repeated and humble, "I am *not*," points always and only to the great "I AM."

So, John knows who he is and offers what he can, fully and vividly, from within his own life and circumstances. And we are, all of us, likewise called – to fully and vividly live into that same call – from within *our* own lives and circumstances.

I know how this sounds to some – like a bunch of vague, spiritual notions – just the naïve romantic wash of rose-colored glasses.

But scripture repeatedly breaks it down for us in no uncertain terms: If we want to help restore the dream of God in our own time, we must bring good news to the oppressed, bind up the brokenhearted, feed the hungry, proclaim liberty to the captives, and offer comfort to those who mourn.

Each of us can find ways to support, promote, and endorse such Godly things. We only have to decide if we *want* to. At the very least, we can pledge not to work against them.

Advent is a season for thinking it over. As we make our way through this time, week by week, candle by candle, prayer by prayer, we are invited to consider how we can prepare the Way of Love – to figure out who we are and what role we are willing to play in that divine dream, and all from the very real, practical, doable context of our everyday lives.

*Strengthen your hearts,  
for the coming of the Lord is near.*

These are the lenses through which we view the Advent promise and draw strength for our Advent work. Are those lenses rose-colored? Maybe...but the difference is this:

If we will actually do what we say we believe, if we will speak, pray, endorse, and work for the Way of Love, then the world won't just *seem* to be rosy out there, but everything *will* have changed – truly and finally – and the Rose Sunday message of *Rejoice*, will truly and finally be heard.

Amen.