

Old Testament Reading:

Isaiah 35:1–10

- ¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus;
² it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.
³ Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
⁴ Say to those who have an anxious heart,
“Be strong; fear not!”
Behold, your God
will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God.
He will come and save you.”
⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.
For waters break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
⁸ And a highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;
the unclean shall not pass over it.
It shall belong to those who walk on the way;
even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.
⁹ No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain gladness and joy,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Epistle: James 5:7–11

⁷Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. ¹⁰As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

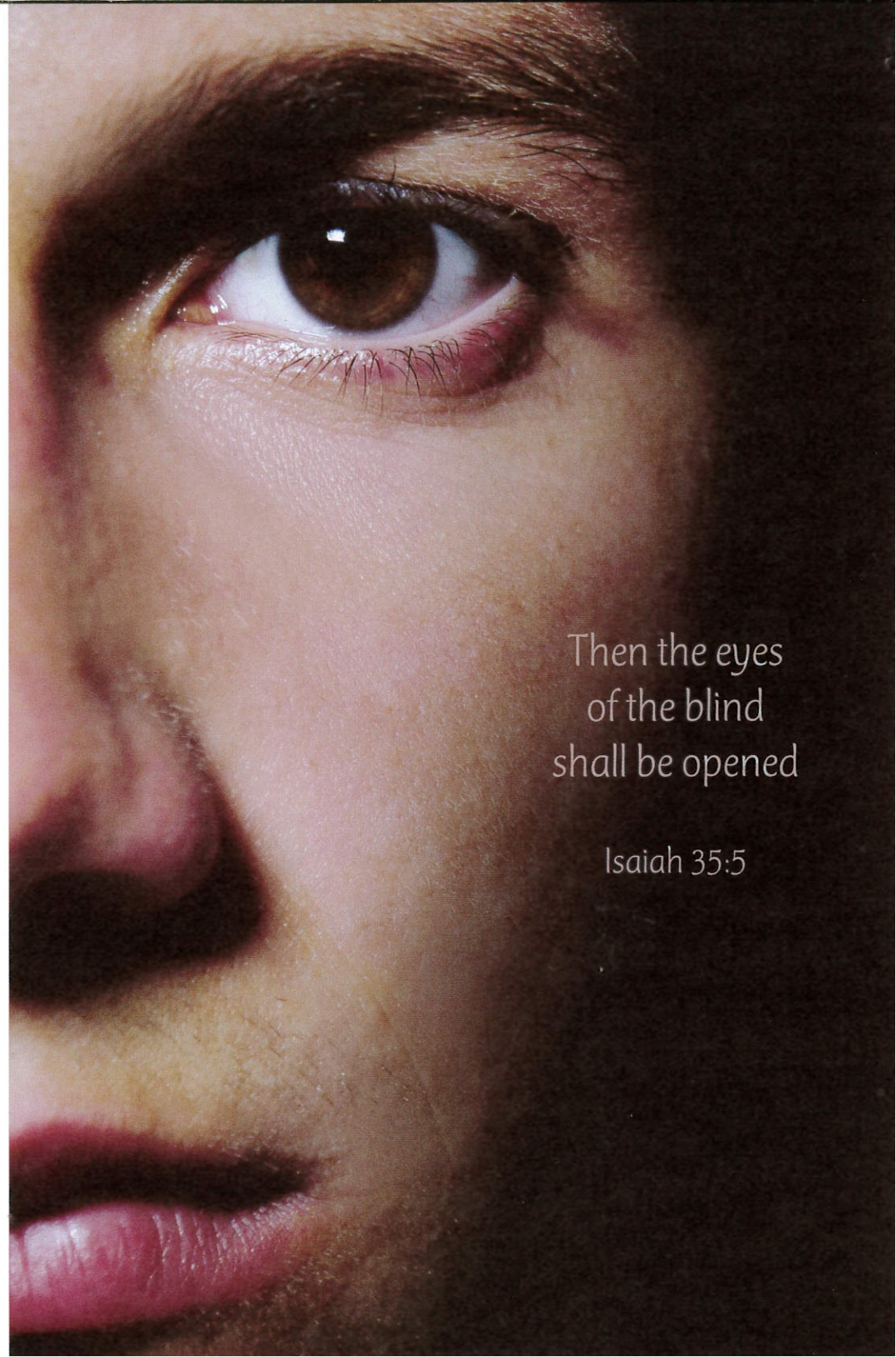
Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:2–15

²When John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ⁴And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

⁷As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. ⁹What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is he of whom it is written,

“Behold, I send my messenger before
your face,
who will prepare your way before you.”

¹¹“Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹²From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. ¹³For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, ¹⁴and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”



Then the eyes
of the blind
shall be opened

Isaiah 35:5



About the Cover: Isaiah presents a beautiful picture of the day when the Lord will make this world right. It is a sight to behold! In His ministry, Jesus literally opened blind eyes to see. At the same time, He was also opening the eyes of faith to see Him as the Messiah. Jesus is still restoring eyes to see aright through His Word. Even though today we see dimly, a day is coming when we shall see face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12).

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH-LCMS

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<https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo>

HEARING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE
HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

Rev. Timothy Nerud Pastor
309-949-2516 (Office), 612-940-8138 (Cell), 309-949-2517 (Home)

Elder: Aaron Raschke

Organist: Corinne Luckinbill

Greeter: Janet Bertso

Videographers: Joel Werling, Nicole Nerud, or Heidi Nerud

Today's Readings: Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 35:1-10
Epistle: James 5:7-11
Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:2-15

WE PRAY: Lord of the end-time testing, grant patience to Your church and to all of us its people against Your announced arrival time to judge the world; through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who with You and the Holy Spirit are one God with dominion over us forever. Amen

WELCOME TO ALL!

We are anxious to share with you the Christ-centered ministry at St. John's. Our Liturgy follows closely the pattern of Word and Lord's Supper handed down from the ancient Church. It is our hope that you will make the Church's life of prayer your own. If you have difficulty following our order of service, please ask someone sitting near you for assistance. We pray that you will receive rich spiritual blessings from your presence here. May the peace and power of our risen Christ be yours always.

IF YOU DESIRE, a visit or call from Pastor Nerud, please contact the church office (309-949-2516).

OFFICE HOURS

Terri's hours (Monday—Friday) 8 am—12 pm
Pastor's hours (Monday, Pastor's day off)
(Tuesday) 9 am—12 pm
(Thursday) 9 am—12 pm & 1 pm—4 pm
(Wednesday & Friday) please call ahead.

STREAM SERVICES <https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo/> and on the website: www.stjohnsgeneseo.org.

ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY

Sunday school—13 Adult Bible Class—10 Worship—86

OFFERING

Offering last Sunday	\$3,320.00
Weekly 2022 Budget income needed	\$4,084.71
Advent One	\$1,050.00

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES AT ST JOHN'S

Today	8:30 am	Practice for Christmas Program
	8:45 am	SS/Adult & Youth Bible Study
	10:00 am	Divine Worship
Tuesday	1:00 pm	LWML Christmas Party
	6:30 pm	Council meeting
Wednesday	5:00 pm	Catechism Class
	7:00 pm	Advent 3 Worship
Next Sunday	8:30 am	SS Christmas Practice
	8:45 am	SS/Adult & Youth Bible Study
	10:00 am	Divine Worship/Holy Communion

*I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD."
Psalms 122:1*

Isaiah 35:4 – "Say to those who have an anxious heart, 'Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.'" The return of our Lord at the Last Day is a cause of joy and anticipation for us believers. We know our Lord and His love, and we look forward to His Second Advent. Indeed, how we live our lives here and now flows from our certain hope of resurrection and eternal life.

ATTENDANCE PADS are at the end of each pew. Each family (members and guests) should sign using only **ONE** box per household, naming all family members present in the one box. **EVERYONE** needs to indicate their intention to receive Holy Communion on a Communion Sunday. Return pad to the right end of your pew. Thanks for your help with this.

ALTAR FLOWERS have been given by Steve & Gail Tutt in thanksgiving for 88 years of blessings granted Robert Tutt, Steve's father. May Robert be granted many more years to serve his Lord and Savior.

ADVENT CARD THREE is being given to each person this morning. Use them as you meditate on Christ's birth and reason for coming His heavenly home to this earth. He gave Himself for each one of us.

THE LWML CHRISTMAS PARTY is Tuesday, December 13 at 1:00 p.m. We would like to invite all ladies to join us for some devotion time, games and refreshments. Please let Liz Neumann know if you plan to attend to help in our planning.

ADVENT 3—Join us this last week as we continue to meditate on the "Songs of the Season" this Wednesday at 7 pm.

SPECIAL MUSIC for CHRISTMAS SEASON: For Christmas Day and New Year's Day @ 9:45 in the sanctuary, we will have a Hymn Sing with your favorite carols and seasonal hymns. We are asking that you list out your requests (see insert) and drop them in the collection basket (on table under office window) on your way out after service. This is a great way to joyfully proclaim the message of our Savior's birth and prepare for worship!

2023 CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPES are in your mailboxes. **Please do not use them until January first.**

THANK YOU, THANK YOU!!! I thank my Heavenly Father for the undeserved life I have been blessed to live. My heart and mind are overflowing with all the love and greetings shown to me last Sunday at church, at my Open House and throughout this past month. Your cards and kind sentiments are truly humbling. I am blessed beyond words by my children, grandchildren, extended family, church family and many friends

May God bless each of you. Joyce DeFauw

SUPPORT OUR SEMINARIES—Good friends of the Seminary have offered to match — dollar for dollar — any unrestricted gift to Concordia Seminary, up to the first \$92,000 raised, between now and December 31. Your generous gift this holiday season can make twice the impact. Now is the optimal time to invest in the formation of pastors, missionaries and deaconesses who will lead us in the worship and witness of our Lord for decades to come. (For easy giving details please contact Terri Hock.)

CHRISTIAN LIVING—Matthew 11:2-15: John the Baptist was put in prison for confronting the political leaders of his day with divine truth. While in prison, he was put to death by King Herod for his straightforward witness to the coming of the Lord, the true and righteous Judge. John, like our Lord's disciples, was happy to suffer for the name of Jesus. John's example encourages us also to be bold witnesses for Jesus as the One who came to bring light and salvation to a darkened world. You may be the only Scripture some people hear. Give them the light of the Gospel in your words and actions and shed some light with the truth of Jesus.

We are collecting 2023 calendars for residents of Hillcrest Home.

PRAYER MINISTRY

The Church waits for the Second Coming in repentance, hope and faith. For the following, we pray "Lord, have mercy."

MISSION—*Pray for parents*, that they would see their role in raising children as a holy calling from God in these last days.

ST JOHN'S—Ms. Calie McKibbin—We offer before You our common request for the well-being of Your church throughout the world that it may be so guided and governed by Your good Spirit that all who profess themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth and hold the faith in unity of spirit in the bond of peace, and the righteousness of life. Specifically, we pray for Cali and ask Your blessings upon her.

ST. JOHN'S FAMILY—O Lord, You are the great Physician of soul and body. We pray that You would show mercy to Your servants:

Elizabeth Bjork	Betty Firch	Drew Schillinger
Paula Chapa	Arlyn Helke	Carolyn Wildermuth
Jim Dahl	Lynne Johnson	Marilyn Woods
Lois Esterlein	Jessica Johnson	

Anthony/Sami Sedotto (2022/2023 Adopted seminary student)

Don Eggers (son of friend of Marilyn Woods)

Jodi Martins (daughter of Gary & Darla Johns)

Jon/Anita Clausing (missionaries in Kenya)

Marilyn Potts (wife of Cal Potts, former St. John Laborer for Christ)

Rev. Justin Kane (son of Sandra Kane)

Laurie Sanford (sister of Jan Dahl)

Susan Mayden (sister of Michele Barry)

Russ Klavon (brother of Carolyn Werner)

MILITARY—We pray for those serving in our military and their families:

Mandy/Richard Davila (daughter/son-in-law of Linda Aper)

Luke/Nicole Thompson (son/daughter-in-law of John/Kindra Thompson)

Ken Willeford (husband of Alicia Willeford)

Karl Flynn (son of Mr/Mrs Paul Flynn)

Zachary/Tiffany Gardner (nephew/wife of Lois Esterlein)

Casey Powers Jr. (step son of Lisa Powers)

Brittany Loenser (daughter of Gabe Loenser)

LUTHERANS FOR LIFE

“As sure as Christmas will come again on December 25, our Lord will come again. As we look forward to the Last Day, let's dress for the occasion, putting on godliness and repentance. Let's celebrate everything He did the first time He came to assure us of our home of righteousness. Let's be spiritually awake and alert for His coming again, knowing that we will enjoy God's perfect paradise, our eternal home.” *Rev. Peter Sulzle, St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Redwood Falls, Minnesota – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutherans-forlife.org*

NOW OPEN, SWADDLING CLOTHES @ Concordia Lutheran Church, Geneseo. This is a mission of Concordia, created as a place for moms and moms-to-be find some help gathering all the items needed for a new bundle of joy. (We are also here to help dads, custodial grandparents, and foster parents). Our free shopping room is open every 2nd Thursday from 4-7 pm and every 4th Saturday from 9 am-noon. Tell anyone who maybe in need of this help. Concordia is at 316 S. Oakwood Ave, Geneseo. For more information call, 309-944-3993 or visit www.swaddlingclothes.org.

CAMP CILCA is already planning for next season's summer camps. Early Bird registration is underway. Brochures are in the mailbox of families with children. Additional brochures can be found on the counter between the mailboxes. Scholarships are available from both St. John's and Camp CILCA.

Third Sunday in Advent

December 11, 2022

Text: Matthew 11:2-15 (Gospel Reading)

Other Texts: Isaiah 35:1-10 (Old Testament); James 5:7-11 (Epistle)

“Are You the One?”

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ who came one in humility and will come again exalted in heavenly majesty. Amen.

Feelings of disappointment are pretty common, aren't they? Most of the time they are just annoyances that are relatively minor in the grand scheme of things, like a sports team that loses a big game. Sometimes they are over more serious issues, like the plans of a much needed vacation ruined due to illness, car troubles, or whatever. And then there are very serious issues, such as the failed hopes and dreams in a marriage. But truly there is no greater disappointment possible than when the target of our failed expectations, our dashed hopes, *is God Himself*.

We hope God will act in certain ways, do certain things. But then He doesn't do it the way we expect. We pray for something, asking for it with all our heart, but our prayer is seemingly not answered. We see injustice and evil upon innocents, such as terrorism and abortion. We see persecution of Christians in foreign lands, and increasing hostility towards believers here at home. There are tragedies upon innocents. The wicked seem to prosper while believers struggle in so many ways. And we can't help but wonder “Why?” And as this churns in our mind, our questioning God's ways slowly but surely becomes questioning Him, *doubting* Him. And as doubt grows, our faith sickens, for doubt is the opposite of faith.

Dear Christians, you and I are not alone with our questions, our doubts. When thinking of Biblical saints, there really are few who could surpass John the Baptist. In fact, the Lord Himself said, “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.”ⁱ Here's a man who warned the crowds of the unquenchable fire awaiting all who do not repent, who called the powerful religious leaders “a brood of vipers,” and who condemned Herod Antipas,ⁱⁱ the tetrarch of Galilee, for a sinful marriage. No, John was anything but a reed shaken by the wind or a fancy dressed dandy in the king's court. Yes, he was even more than a prophet, being the prophesied messenger, the new Elijah, who would prepare the way for the Lord's coming. You really can't get much more impressive than John the Baptist.

But a year in a dungeon can get a man thinking. And that's John's situation in today's Gospel as, not surprisingly, Herod wasn't real keen on his marriage being judged as sinful. So John starts wondering, here I am, the forerunner of the Lord, *the Lord who is out there right now*, and I'm rotting in prison for preaching His Word while the wicked, immoral ruler who imprisoned me sits happily on his throne. Again, John starts thinking about the message he preached, the message of the coming Lord unleashing His judgment, the message of “bear fruits of repentance” or else, as the axe is at the ready to cut the unfruitful trees and be cast into the unquenchable fire.ⁱⁱⁱ And when John thinks of his message and then compares that to what he's hearing about Jesus, all the works of grace and mercy, something seems wrong.

Now don't misunderstand me, it wasn't that John was *against* grace. He was fully aware that the Messiah would bring God's mercy and he preached such. After all, he was the one that declared Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."^{iv} And he baptized people for the forgiveness of sins.^v Truly, John did not doubt that Jesus was sent by God, since he himself saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus in the form of a dove when he baptized Him.^{vi}

However, his *expectations* for the Messiah also included wrath and judgment upon God's enemies, upon the immoral, the wicked, the sinner and unbeliever, and the corresponding rescue of God's repentant people. And what John sees and hears, truly what he's experiencing personally, is falling far short of what his expectations for the kingdom of God were! So his question comes to Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another."^{vii}

As I said, John doesn't doubt that Jesus was sent by God, but he is wondering if another one is coming after Jesus, the one who will then bring God's wrath. Interestingly, he's close, but has it flip-flopped. For there won't be a second one coming, but a second coming of the same One. But note how Jesus responds to John's question. He simply points John to the works of grace that He is doing, the healing miracles and the preaching of the Gospel of salvation.

Jesus' actions answer John's question with an absolute "Yes!" For these are the works that the Messiah was prophesied to perform, the works of the renewal and restoration of Israel. The effects of sin, disease, blindness, deafness, death, these are being undone in Jesus' ministry. Such miracles prove that He is Coming One, who establishes the new age of salvation that was prophesied long before, the age longed for ever since it was first promised to Adam and Eve.

Seeing that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies strengthened John's faith, helping him accept the strangeness of the paradox. The paradox that the reign of God has come into the world in the person of Jesus, who is God Himself, the eternal Son in human flesh and blood walking the face His earth. But at the same time, the power of violent men, who oppose His kingdom with force, remains strong. Violent men who do the will of their master, the devil who is a violent murderer from the beginning, who prowls like a roaring lion to devour us.^{viii} Yes, John is called to accept that God is reigning in Jesus, but that God's reign is currently hidden, lowly, and yes, *resistible*.

Truly, this paradox is seen most clearly in the crucifixion of Christ Himself. After all, here is the Coming One, the King, and He is resisted by Jew and Gentile alike, rejected and killed by the very creatures He created, whom He came to save. We look at Jesus on the cross, dying in utter shame and weakness, and we are tempted to ask as well "Are you the one?"

Yet, in reality, God's purpose *will* be done. For the crucifixion of Christ was His will, worked out through those same very violent men who had opposed Jesus, resisted Him. The will of God that the sins of all will be forgiven by the very death inflicted upon Him. While from our limited perspective it looks like humans can stop God's reign and rule, as seen in the crucified Christ and how His Word and Church are opposed and persecuted, the truth is that *Christ is ruling*, but the majesty of His deeds are hidden from sight, even from us, His disciples.

Consider, His reign. Simple words of Absolution spoken by a fellow sinner-saint, the application of ordinary water, and the eating and drinking of bread and wine; rather unimpressive at best.

Yet these have God's command to do as well as His promise of forgiveness and eternal life when received in faith. Truly these lowly means of grace are God's rule in action, empowered by the life, death, and resurrection of the King. So also, self-denial, suffering for the sake of Christ, the killing of our sinful nature, patient endurance in the midst of trial, sacrificing ourselves for the sake of others out of love that expects no thanks, no pay-back, all seemingly foolish actions, no? Yet, *these are the glorious works* that will follow God's saints into glory.^{ix}

“Are you the one?” We ask this when life does not meet our expectations. But note, we are not judge God by our limited knowledge or senses. “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.”^x His thought are to redeem those who should be damned. His ways are to sacrifice Himself to save sinners, and to call those who have been saved to sacrifice themselves for others so that many more would also repent and be saved.

And so, like John, God turns us away from our false and unfulfilled expectations, which too often we have made into wrong priorities and even idolatry. He turns us towards Jesus, His gracious works towards us, especially His death as our substitute. In His Word of promise, God reminds us, assures us, that Jesus is the King, and that He is reigning even now in grace and mercy in His Church through the Word. And so our faith is strengthened, our hope confirmed. The hope that *the Day will come* at last when Jesus will make our salvation fully visible. The salvation for God's people when all violent men and spirits will be fully overthrown, their resistance proven to be futile as they are eternally condemned to fiery doom. The salvation for God's people when, in the Kingdom of Glory, there will no longer be any disappointments, for our expectations of how things should be will not only at long last be met, but they will truly be exceeded in every way possible as only God Himself can do!

In the name of Jesus. Amen!

ⁱ Matthew 11:11a. All quotes are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV)* unless otherwise noted.

ⁱⁱ Herod Antipas is the son of Herod the Great who was the king when Jesus was born.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Matthew 3:1-12.

^{iv} John 1:29.

^v Mark 1:4.

^{vi} See Matthew 3:16; John 1:32.

^{vii} Matthew 11:3.

^{viii} John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8.

^{ix} Revelation 14:13.

^x Isaiah 55:8.

Third Sunday in Advent (A)
11 December 2022

Presentation of the Offering

Our humble offerings we now bring To you, dear Jesus, Savior-King./ Accept them, small as they may be; And by Your Spirit help us see/ Whatever work needs yet be done So others may learn that heaven is won,/ Is work which each of us must do, And, what's done for others, is done for You. Amen.

Prayer of the Church—Responsive Form

Father of all mercies, the visitation of Your Son has enlightened the darkness of our hearts and every corner of creation. Hear us as we pray in His name and according to His will.

O God, You have sent messengers to prepare the way of Your Son's coming. Grant us ears to hear and hearts to believe the words delivered by pastors and all who bear Your Word. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious Lord, You have instituted the home to be a refuge for husbands and wives and a place of growth and safety for children. Look with favor upon the homes of our land, and grant that the faith might be delivered from one generation to the next. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Righteous Lord, You rule over all things in heaven and on earth. Until that day when Your Son comes in glory to usher in His kingdom, give wisdom and insight to all leaders, that we may live peaceable lives. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, the prophet Isaiah looked for the day when blind eyes would see, deaf ears would hear, lame legs would leap and mute tongues would sing. Until the final day of restoration, draw near to all who have requested our prayers, especially Elizabeth, Bruce, Debbie, Jim, Don, Lois, Betty, Arlyn, Jessica, Lynne, Justin, Russ, Jodi, Susan, Marilyn, Laurie, Drew, Carolyn, and Marilyn, and give them healing according to Your gracious will. Bind up those who grieve, that they may look for the resurrection of all flesh. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Christ, our King, remember Cali McKibbon. Bless her in body and soul with all things needful for this life and eternity. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Giver of all good things, we thank You for blessing Robert, Steve Tutt's father, with length of days in this present life, celebrating 88 years, and we pray that he, along with all Your baptized children, young and old, would see this life as a gift from Your hand, know Your loving-kindness, dwell in the certainty of Your care and protection, and serve You faithfully until You finally bring us into the glories of the world without end. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, Your love invites us to rejoice in Your goodness. In every circumstance of life, teach us the joy that comes from knowing Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and eagerly expecting His gracious visitation; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Collect of the Day

Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Collect for the Word