



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Father Chris Comerford
December 16, 2018 Third Sunday of Advent

Reading I Zephaniah 3:14-18

Psalm Isaiah 12:2-6

Reading II Philippians 4:4-7

Gospel Luke 3:10-18

Homily

St. Paul's words to us are very fitting for this time of the year. "Rejoice in the Lord, always. I say it again, Rejoice." Now many of you are asking, "How can we be happy during this time of the year? We are so busy: parties, cooking, cleaning, cooking, all of these things. How can we be happy?" It is a challenge. I remember a couple years ago standing in line at a store when it was close to Christmas and I heard someone say, "I can't wait for Christmas to be over." You can't wait until Christmas is over! If you are saying that you probably do not have the right way of the heart. So it is a challenge at times for us to find joy.

We have a lot of difficulties and if you have some issues in your family—it intensifies this time of the year. Many are feeling the loss of a loved one, and we are not saying you should never be sad, but there is a difference in joy. Sometimes we use two words as synonyms, but they really are not: Joy and happiness. They are not the same thing. Happiness is the emotion. Happiness can happen in the little things we see. We enjoy humor and that often brings us happiness, or a meal, or something fun that we like to do. But it is often fleeting. It doesn't last. It is short term.

But joy is different. Joy comes from, as we read in the Scriptures, knowing that "we are loved by God." That is ultimately the source of joy. I know people who in their lives have gone through terrible things. For some it is over and over and over again, it is more than their share. But they still have joy. They knew in the depth of their hearts that God loves them. And they know the best way in life is to show love to one another. Joy and love are definitely connected, especially that unconditional, selfless love.

It is something we need to see: to find that joy in our life even amidst the sadness and the challenges, and to know the love of God and to share the love of God with others. That is where we will find the depth of that joy.

People were coming to John the Baptist and being baptized and seeking repentance, and thought, "Now they were going to do something." That is us. We are doers. But they ask Jesus, "What should we do?" His answer is: "Whoever has two cloaks, give him one. Whoever has food, share it with others. Share with those who do not have enough."

What a great thing to do. You know we have been taking that on during this Advent Season. We have done that each weekend in our collections. They have been great. There is a lot out there this weekend for our food pantries that we collect. So whatever items that are difficult financially for some people to purchase, we are helping them. And that's a good thing.

Many of you do that by being involved in the toy drives that go on. There are a lot of ways to do this. Maybe adopt a family who doesn't have enough to celebrate Christmas this year. There are many ways to help.

Obviously we feel better when we give something—than when we receive. Always. It is good to find ways to do this, not just at Christmastime, but all year round. Really. It is great to think about that.

Even the tax collectors wanted to change. So what did Jesus tell them: "Quit taking more than is prescribed. Be fair. Be just with people." His message is to not take advantage of people, even if the opportunity is there. Pray for that. He told the soldiers: "Don't practice extortion. Don't falsely accuse someone. Be satisfied with your wages." That sounds like the last of the commandments, doesn't it: "Do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not covet other people's things, and be satisfied." That's the challenge Jesus gave to them, and to us today.

Be open in that way. These are not easy things to do. And by hearing these things the people began to think, "Maybe John the Baptist is the one." They had this joyful anticipation, even expectation. But John says, "You haven't seen nothin' yet. The Savior who is still to come, and I am not even worthy to unfasten his sandals. I cannot hold a candle to him."

This is an incredible gift that has been given to us. Jesus has come and has given us life. Hopefully we can come and take this joy into our hearts. Sometimes it is just a change in attitude, looking at life with a new perspective of the things going on in our lives.

What motivates us, especially this time of the year? Hopefully, it is knowing that God has loved us so much, that he sent us his only son to save us from our sins. That is where the true joy is at, so let's take the words of St. Paul to heart. "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say, rejoice."

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(Third TASCAM Recorder DR 40 file 13)*

